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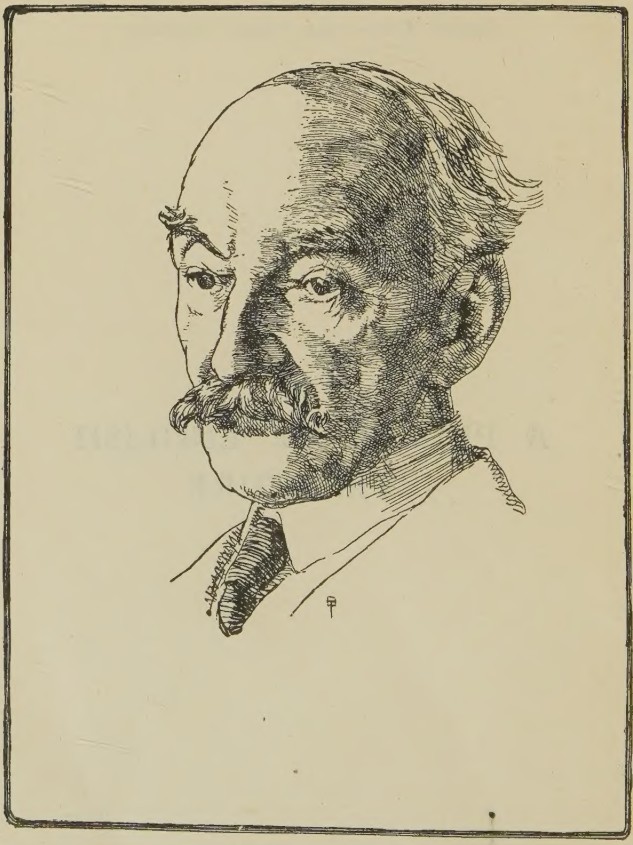

THOMAS HARDY

From a pen-drawing by
E. Heber Thompson

A PRIMER OF
English Literature

By
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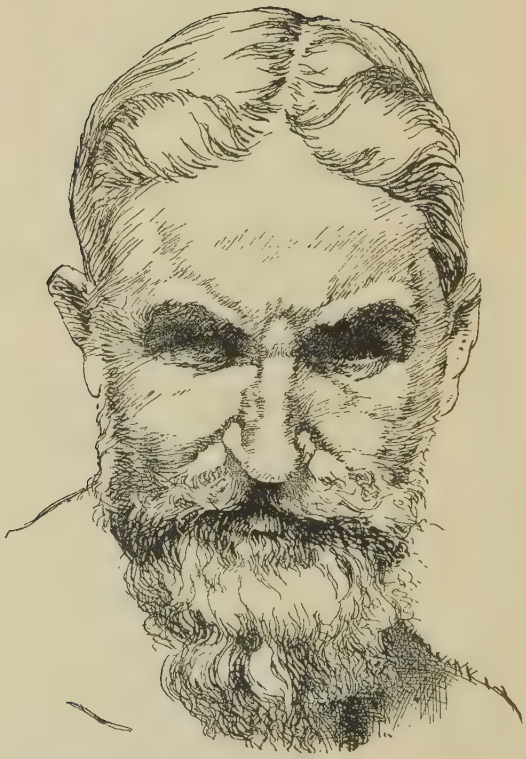


GEORGE BERNARD SHAW

From a pen-drawing by
E. Heber Thompson

A PRIMER OF ENGLISH LITERATURE

CHAPTER I

The Making of the English Speech

Introduction.—The fabric of our literature is shot with the varying tints of racial characteristics ; the sombre imagination of the Celt, the flaming passion of the Saxon, the golden gaiety of France, and the prismatic fancy of the South. Many have been the influences brought to bear upon our speech ; yet in this composite texture the Anglo-Saxon element dominates. That is the outstanding fact. We have only to take some passage of modern poetry, say a few lines from Tennyson's *Passing of Arthur*, to realize clearly the complex character of our tongue, and the persistence of the Saxon element—

"Then from the dawn it seemed there came, but faint
As from beyond the limit of the world,
Like the last echo born of a great cry,
Sounds, as if some fair city were one voice
Around a king returning from his wars."

Here we have in the ancient story of Arthur the earliest strand in our literature—the Celtic element ; though the legend of the Mysterious Passing was interwoven with it at a later date by the French Romancers.

Looking at the words, forty-three in number, it will be seen that of these thirty-three are of Anglo-Saxon

origin. For instance: dawn, from Anglo-Saxon *dagian*, "to become day"; king, from Anglo-Saxon *cyning*. This illustrates the practical predominance of the Saxon element in our speech. Of the remaining words, five are from the French—*e.g.* faint from old French *faint*, and cry from *crier;* sounds from old French *soun;* city from French *cité*, and voice from old French *vois;* limit is from the French and Latin (*limite*, and *limes*); and echo is from the Latin and Greek (L. *ēcho*, and Gr. *ēchō*).

The passage quoted was selected at random, and others would have yielded a richer supply of words of French and classical origin; but this serves its purpose in indicating the French, and the classical (Latin and Greek) influences upon our tongue. One other point there is to note, namely, the persistence down to the present day of the old Saxon trick of alliteration. It is certainly less marked here than in many passages of Tennyson, but it is seen in such a line as—

"Sounds as if some fair city . . ."

Mediæval Literature

The first thing to recognize in mediæval literature, is that it falls naturally into two periods—

(1) The Anglo-Saxon Period, and (2) The Middle English Period. The first period (*c.* 670–*c.* 1050) deals with the legendary literature of an ancient Northern people. The second (1050–1400) with the experimental literature of a composite race.

What we have of the first is only a fragment, but for five hundred years it was a vital force in the lives of our Teutonic forefathers. And while the British were living under the easy surveillance of Rome, English literature was growing up in Scandinavia and Northern Germany, where the Angles and Saxons lived. So that when these Northern tribes came down upon our

coasts, and after stubborn resistance drove back the British into a corner of Britain, they brought with them a poetry from which we may fairly date our national literature. This poetry is expressed in a language derived from old German. The British, or Celtic inhabitants were not exterminated; but persisted, and their legends (Welsh and Gaelic) exerted later a powerful influence over the English. Then from the eleventh to the fourteenth century France dominated the literature of Europe, and England like other nations fell under her sway. This is the Middle English Period.

Anglo-Saxon poetry is markedly different from the poetry of the next period, for it deals with the traditions of an older world, and expresses another temperament and way of living; it breathes the influence of the wind and storm-wrack. It is the poetry of a stern and passionate people, concerned with the primal things of life, moody, melancholy, and fierce, yet with great capacity for endurance and fidelity. With the next period—namely, the Middle English—a more vivacious, more romantic[1] element passes into our verse.

The Anglo-Saxon Period

English Poetry before the Conquest of Britain.—The earliest English poem, written by our ancestors while on the Continent, is *Widsith—The Song of the Traveller*, a kind of travel journal, in which the vagrant minstrel tells us of the people he has visited and places to which he has been. Another of these poems, *Deor's Complaint*, is a lyrical cry of one bard about another

[1] The term *romance* originally meant a tale in verse written in a Romance dialect—Latin. It was concerned with wonderful adventures, and its secondary meaning has usurped its original signification. But the tenor of the Romance differs from the Epic, also concerned with stirring exploits, in its emphatically sentimental character.

and more successful rival. This poem is probably our first English lyric.

The lyric, however, was not congenial to the English temperament, the epic, or narrative poem dealing with heroic deeds, being far better suited to its muse. Of such, *Beowulf* is the most representative.

Beowulf.—This poem of over 3,000 lines has for its background Scandinavian scenery. It concerns a Scandinavian thane who comes to the help of his neighbour Hrothgar, and *Beowulf* tells us of his exploits, especially of his desperate fight with a terrible dragon, Grendel, possibly symbolic of the sea, to whose poison he ultimately succumbs—not, however, before killing the monster. The historical background is drawn with clear actuality, and the character of Beowulf is pictured for us vigorously and impressively. There is an Homeric greatness about the atmosphere of the poem, which makes it of real value to us in understanding something of the spirit of our Teutonic ancestors ; it is certainly one of the most important monuments of Anglo-Saxon literature, and was found during the eighteenth century in a MS. written in Saxon times. Originally it was Pagan in tone, with the stern and dignified paganism of the old Sagas ; but attempts were made in the eighth century to accommodate it (with ill success) to the faith of the day. The ideal of life it presents is a primal and strenuous one. Of the sentiment and tenderness dear to the later French romances there is not a trace. It deals with hard fighting, and hearty eating and drinking, tells of the delight of music after the toil of the day, and of full-blooded elemental passion ; and it carries that undernote of fierce regret on the brevity of life and the certainty of death, so characteristic of Northern poetry.

But its interest goes beyond this, for it paints, simply and clearly, the social customs of our ancestors —how they lived in peace and war ; what their town

and country places looked like; of their attitude towards their women folk; of their pleasures and their hardships.

And what we may gather about our ancestors is this:

Anglo-Saxon Life.—The Anglo-Saxons were a pastoral people, living on the fringe of the Baltic and the North Sea, in a country bleak and low-lying, though not unfitted to cradle a brave and hardy race. Tillers of the soil, and hunters by compulsion, they became also by force of circumstance fierce sea-rovers. Inured by long privation to the terrors of the sea, they made little of its dangers, and a Roman writer has told us, how that they would plunder the western coasts, sailing down upon them in their high-prowed warships in the midst of a storm so that their victims might be the less prepared. Truly enough were they likened to sea-wolves.

In appearance they were big, large-limbed men, with blue-grey eyes and ruddy of face; relentless, savage, and daring, yet courageous and faithful to one another, and among their women folk gentle and loyal. Above all, law-abiding according to their lights, and with that fierce passion for independence that has always marked our race. The freeman had his house with its long hall, where he ate, and slept with his comrades on the straw-strewn floor. The women kept house, spinning and weaving garments for the men, while the men folk roved abroad. Yet they also took part in public affairs; shared in all social functions; held property, and in the open-air assembly or moot, helped to settle local affairs. In social life among the Greeks, as described by Homer, we have a very similar picture of the way of living; and as with the Greeks, so among the Saxons, was there a Minstrel or Glee-man in each household, who sang songs at the close of the day—songs of ancient tradition mingled with verse of his own making.

English Poetry after the Conquest of Britain.—So far, the poetry, though written in the English language, is not part of the literature of England. The first native English maker of verse is Cædmon.

CÆDMON.—The aged herdsman, Cædmon, so Bede tells us, put into verse stories from the Bible in the lonely monastery of Hild that stood on the rough moorland near Whitby, overlooking the North Sea. And his verse-making came about in this way.

Leaving the feast and the singers, because he could not take part, he fell asleep among the cattle. And while he slept he dreamed that one came to him and commanded him to sing, "Of what am I to sing?" said Cædmon. "About the beginning of created things." He then fashioned a song about the Creation, and awakened from his dream. The song he remembered, and made many more like it. And after this he became a monk.

These stories in verse—*Cædmon's Paraphrase*—were written about 670, and became very famous. Thus did the old paganism merge into the Christian sentiment of the time. Of these poems only a fragment has survived, quoted by Bede and carried from monastery to monastery. But the influence of Cædmon upon his successors was great. The religious note in English verse persisted throughout the Middle Ages, died down at the Renascence, but reappeared again in Milton, and continued until Victorian times.

CYNEWULF.—Cynewulf, his successor, is full of the new religious ardour. Writing about the close of the eighth century, he sings of "the clashing of the sea waves," and "the rolling of the waters" and of "foaming billows" that cover the earth; but his verse has nothing of the old pagan wistfulness. It is alert and joyous.

During the following century the scattered poems of the past were gathered together into collections,

and in the tenth century religious poetry is mingled with plentiful war songs, such as the *Song of Brunanburgh* (937), in which the conflict between Saxon and Dane figures prominently.

Characteristics of Anglo-Saxon Poetry :—

1. It resembles Hebrew poetry, indulging in parallelism [1] and metaphorical phrases.

2. In metre it is marked by accent and persistent alliteration.

3. Rhyme is absent, and there is no definite number of syllables. The metre undergoes a good many variations, and responds to the nature of the subject.

4. The poetry was sung, for in early times poetry and music were one and indivisible, and the minstrel was free to modify the movement of the verse. Any modification introduced was, however, subject to certain rules. There were always four accented syllables and three alliterative syllables. Many changes were wrought later in the Middle English period through French influences, but the trick of alliteration has become an integral part of all English poetry; and though no longer a structural part of English prosody, is regarded to-day as an ornament, not an essential. It has been used with most remarkable effect by Swinburne.

5. There is a prevalence of compound words, by means of which the poet sought to condense the qualities of his subject. This characteristic also has survived.

For instance, when Rossetti speaks of "hoarse-tongued fire," or Keats of "leaden-eyed despair," they are using a poetical method derived from our earliest verse.

6. The style of this poetry is, on the whole, diffuse, though when the writer is greatly moved it becomes

[1] By *parallelism* is meant the repetition of the same *statement* or *idea* in different ways; by *alliteration* the repetition of the same *letter* (or sound) at the beginning or in the body of different words, in close juxtaposition to one another.

more simple and direct. And while there is force and vigour, and often the austere splendour of the Icelandic Saga about the work, there are no graces or subtleties, and the lyric note is extremely rare.

The form of poetry chiefly favoured by these elder writers is the epic; it suited both their manner and matter, and lent itself to the treatment of heroic deeds. William Morris's translation of the Scandinavian Sagas will give the modern reader a fair idea of the trend and character of this early poetry.

Anglo-Saxon Prose.—The prose, unlike the poetry, was not used as an emotional stimulant. It was in the main educational.

BEDE is the first name we encounter here. Like Cædmon he was a Northumbrian, with a passion for learning only equalled by his piety and fidelity to his monastic order. He studied eagerly every department of human thought—the philosophies, arts, and sciences: and to his *Ecclesiastical History* we are indebted for our knowledge of the England of his time. He wrote in Latin for the most part, but was quick to recognize the possibilities of the Saxon tongue, and when dying is said to have repeated to himself some of the old poems already mentioned.

Northumbria was the home of the earlier Saxon literature. With the coming of the Danes in the tenth century the seat of scholarship and study passed to Wessex.

ALFRED.—Alfred is the next influence with which to reckon. He is a real founder of English prose, just as Cædmon is the originator of its poetry. He wrote in English, not in Latin, and used it to teach history, politics, religion, to the people. During his reign the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* came into existence; and if not his own work, it probably owed much to his inspiration. This is the most important landmark of Anglo-Saxon prose, and was continued beyond the Conquest down to the death of Stephen.

Under Edgar and Elfric prose literature continued to flourish, and to become stronger and more varied in expression.

But the Danish invasions made great inroads upon the progress of literature during later Saxon times, though it was far too vital a thing now to be suppressed.

Characteristics.—At its best, as in the fighting episodes of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, Old English prose is clear and forcible, and occasionally, in the hands of Elfric, rhythmic and musical. But it is well to remember that its chief aim was that of instruction, for the most part religious in nature, concerning itself with the stories of the Bible and the lives of the Saints.

The Middle English Period: Poetry and Prose

Latin was the language in which the cultured man of Norman times wrote, and French was the language spoken in polite society. The Saxon tongue languished, and there is little doubt that the Norman Conquest did for a time militate against the development of our literature. Many Saxons wrote in French, and, with the exception of the *Saxon Chronicle*, which went on until 1154, the bulk of the prose was written in Latin. English prose after the *Chronicle* practically slumbered until its remarkable awakening in the sixteenth century.

Yet, after all, the Norman Conquest was not the conquest of England by an alien race. The Normans were originally Northmen like the Anglo-Saxons and Danes, even though southern influences had greatly modified their character and outlook. And this affinity was ultimately felt by both Saxon and Norman. Consequently there was a real fusion between the two races. On the Saxon side we accepted the traditions of France in matters poetical. On the

Norman side we finally chose the Saxon tongue in place of the French in which to express ourselves.

Middle English Poetry.—The old Saxon verse, with its sober dignity and strong religious bias, abruptly ceases after the Conquest. But this is less the result of the Conquest than the effect of the dominance of French poetry throughout Europe. The old alliterative verse indeed had declined before the Conquest, becoming a negligible quantity until the fourteenth century, when there is a most extraordinary revival, the *Morte d'Arthur* and *Piers Plowman* being two of the most famous examples. In the twelfth century even the Scandinavian peoples took from the French their ballads and rhymings. The successful fight with the French in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries helped to consolidate both the English people and their literature. And in the reign of Edward I. English poetry once again became a force. It has, however, changed in character.

Let us examine the new medium of expression. On the one side it retains an older characteristic, the religious note; on the other side it presents a new phase, the romantic note, derived from France.

(a) *The Religious Note.*—The scholastic activities of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries favoured the continuance of religious verse. Those ripe scholars, Lanfranc and Anselm, were the early inspirers, and later on the missionary monks sent by Bernard of Clairvaux further stimulated devotional verse.

Orm's *Ormulum* (*c.* 1215), a metrical version of the Gospels with some hortatory matter added, is the first of any importance. The sources of this book are the old Saxon writers, Elfric and Bede. Following this come Lives of the Saints in verse, English Saints being given special prominence—*e.g.* St. Cuthbert, St. Dunstan, St. Swithin, St. Wulfstan. In addition to the verse there are pious treatises in prose; one, for instance, the *Ancren Riwle*, or rule for recluse women

(Anchoresses), which belongs to the thirteenth century. This is an ascetic manual for young women who wish to dedicate themselves to God. The author, Bishop Poor of Salisbury, preaches the gospel of self-abnegation, yet in a conciliatory and gracious manner. But he will have no paltering with worldly things. Domestic pets must be restricted to one cat, and the young women must refrain even from glancing out of the parlour windows.

The teaching of religious doctrine by means of verse and prose proceeded with great vigour under the Mendicant Friars ; and it was necessary to give it in a palatable story form in order to interest the people. A notable book of this kind is the *Cursor Mundi*, written about 1320, which treats in poetical form of the historical portions of the Bible, with a number of legends about Saints in addition. Like the early Mysteries and Miracle Plays, it was a means of popularizing, clearly and vividly, the sacred story.

In all this work there is abundance of French words, and practically no alliteration. The language is in a transitional stage.

The greatest religious poem of the time, Langland's *The Book of Piers the Plowman*, must be given more detailed consideration.

William Langland and his *Book*.—Probably of low extraction, Langland was from his earliest years familiar with the poor folk both of the city and of the country.

His mental alertness had interested others in him, and of patrons he had not a few. But after a while these died, leaving him to look out for himself. We find him living in Cornhill, poor and unhappy, with his wife Catherine and daughter Nicolette. Too old to form fresh friendships—he had never been a companionable man—he strides the streets with bitterness in his heart.

True, he had one solace—his book—and one feels

that into it was poured his life-blood ; all his hopes and despairs, his sorrows and aspirations, his anger and his compassion went into these Visions.

Like another famous writer of allegory, he fell asleep, and in a " field ful of folkes " he saw the men and women of his dream—knights, monks, preachers, peasants, cooks that cry out " Hote pyes hote," and " mystrelles " that sell " glee." And the object of their journey, like that of the more famous journey from the City of Destruction, was the search for Truth and Good.

He reproaches—

> " Bochiers and cokes [1]
> For these are men on this molde [2]
> That most harm wercheth [3]
> To the pooere people
> That percelmale briggen [4]
> For they empoisone the people
> Priveliche and ofte." [5]

Also he condemns the rich people for " regrating "—that is, the custom of buying up provisions and retailing them to the poor at great profit.

In his ethical earnestness and sombre outlook he had a forerunner in Richard Rolle, a Yorkshire hermit and mystic, who wrote in the Saxon tongue, both verse and prose, to benefit the common people.

Langland, though the spokesman for the labouring classes, favoured the old class divisions and reviled the insurgents of 1381 ; in these matters he is reactionary. He wants reform, but within the Church. He is less drastic in his proposals for clerical reform than Wyclif.

For instance, the knaves who traffic in " pardons " ; the friars who make a pretence of religion ; knights to whom fighting was merely an excuse to express their lust for blood ; the countless men and women, both

[1] Butchers and cooks.
[2] Earth.
[3] Worketh.
[4] Piecemeal bring.
[5] Privately and often.

in town and country, whose lives were dominated by no great principle or ideal—all these he lashed ; the rottenness, which was breaking up all the real strength and greatness of the Middle Ages, Langland saw with marvellous clearness. Where can truth be found ? This is his cry. And so the messengers—Reason, Repentance, and Hope—help in the search for truth, guided by Piers himself. Piers insists upon manual labour as the first essential, and extols this with the enthusiasm of a Thoreau.

The World is at hand to wheedle and bribe the honest worker ; the World in the person of Lady Meed, attractive but heartless, whose name itself savours of bribery.

Especially vivid is the picture of the revellers in the City Tavern. Here we have quarrels or discussions, and heavy drinking, and the noisy ritual of mirth for which taverns in every age are renowned ; the hermit, the cobbler, the clerk of the Church, the hangman, and the harlot meet together.

The scene shifts constantly and unexpectedly from town to country—from London to Malvern ; vigorous and pungent homilies break in upon the action of the story, and the upshot of all is that the poet bids us " lerne to love " as the one cure for the ills of life.

With Langland, the special characteristic of the old Saxon verse, alliteration, long neglected, is used once more. The verse is rough and uncouth, but is passionately sincere.

The *Visions* were very popular, and soon became the spoken symbol of the suffering poor. John Ball invokes Langland's authority, and even so late as the Reformation, the name of Piers is in use. He stands for the " ideal " working man.

Along with Langland we naturally associate Wyclif, for there was the stuff of the religious and social reformer in each, though Wyclif's outlook was the wider and clearer. A hard-headed and keen-witted

Yorkshireman, with a vigorous spirit of independence, he soon took part in the ecclesiastical disputes of the age. Championing the cause of the common people, he set the authority of the Bible against the authority of the Church ; and in order to familiarize the people with the Bible he started, with others, the translation of the Bible into the Saxon vernacular, reinforcing its teaching with sermons and tracts of his own, written in simple and homely speech. His importance in the history of English prose is rather as the chief translator of the Bible than as an independent writer, for in the latter capacity his work is often too heavily burdened with Latinized terminology. English prose lagged far behind poetry in its vital development ; for until the fifteenth century it was used but very rarely except for educational purposes.

(b) *The Romantic Note.*—In religious poetry we were carrying on, if in a somewhat altered fashion, the traditions of Saxon literature. But romance is a new departure altogether ; it was something alien to the Saxon genius.

The elements of sentiment and gaiety are brought for the first time into English literature. Dignity, passion, force—these things are indigenous to Saxon poetry ; to them is added the graceful sentiment, the light and shade, the volubility of Norman verse.

Roughly speaking, it is possible to differentiate this romantic poetry into " courtly " and " popular " ; meaning by courtly the poetry that grew up around the Court, and expressed itself in a chivalric ideal—*e.g.* the Arthurian tales : and by popular, the poetry that centred round familiar country festivals, such as the May games—*e.g.* the Ballad. The courtly poetry scarcely emerges into great distinctiveness, however, until the time of Chaucer ; though there is a constant striving in that direction during the two preceding centuries.

French poetry had in it these two elements—the

courtly and the popular, and they quickly attached themselves to our national standards of thought. It is not always possible, however, to distinguish the two, for there is that famous duologue in verse—*The Owl and the Nightingale*—by Nicholas de Guildford, in which the courtly and popular elements are inextricably blended.

Now, in the French Romantic poetry, which came over here and so profoundly influenced our literature, there were three important story-cycles: the tales of Rome, the tales of France, and the tales of Britain.

The first include the story of Troy, and the adventures of Alexander of Macedon. The Trojan story inspired Virgil, and was popular in France during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. More than one nation fancied descent from Pius Æneas, in an age when to have descended from some fabulous person was looked upon as a guarantee of national respectability. The Greeks themselves claimed Trojan origin, and Geoffrey of Monmouth in his *History of the Britons* described with gusto and particularity their descent from Brutus, great-grandson of Æneas.

The first notable English Poem after the Conquest.—Curiously enough this tale, which greatly took the popular fancy, was translated into French, and retranslated later on by the priest Layamon under the title of *Le Brut* (1205). A striking feature about Layamon's work is the introduction of rhyme into English verse in parts of his work, and the use of similes.

The adventures of Alexander had found an earlier ingress, but there are very few English poems dealing with this theme, though Chaucer says that every one had heard of Alexander's fortunes.

The story-cycle of France is more important as a literary influence. It dealt with Charlemagne, and started in France with the *Story of Roland*. The groundwork of this cycle is historical, and the struggles

depicted between the feudal nobles and their overlord are based on fact ; though such a hero as Huon de Bordeaux is a figment of the imagination.

This cycle was wonderfully popular in mediæval times, and greatly influenced European literature—for example, the stories of Ariosto. In our own time William Morris drew upon its romantic treasures.

This cycle reached its height of development in the eleventh century. It appealed to the Southern nations more than to us, because it was concerned so particularly with the struggle of Christianity and Mohammedanism.

The story-cycle of Britain is, for Englishmen at any rate, by far the most important of these cycles.

What was it ?

It was a cycle of stories, of French origin, written partly in prose, partly in verse, dealing with the old Celtic legend of King Arthur. We are so accustomed to regard Arthur as a national hero, that we do not readily realize how largely the literature around him is in a foreign tongue. For the height of its popularity in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries was the height also of French influence. And it was in the form of a French Romance that these stories became known in England.

It is somewhat curious that we should have adopted as our national hero the chief of the defeated Britons rather than a Saxon leader. But such is the fact ; other epic heroes we passed aside, and took to our hearts the Celtic conqueror of the " Demon Cat."

We do not know what precisely was the character of the original Welsh legend, but we do know that it was mainly concerned with fighting, and that the Launcelot story and the legend of the Grail, together with other tales of King Arthur's knights, were after-thoughts—French embroideries on the original theme.

Sir Thomas Malory later on blended the Arthurian literature—prose and verse—into one prose version.

So much for the chief romantic literary material of the Middle Ages. Other romantic poems of interest to the student of English literature are those written around Sir Gawain—one of King Arthur's knights; *Pearl*—in which the romantic and religious notes merge into an elegy of grief for a personal loss; and English versions of Norman romances, such as *Havelok the Dane, Guy of Warwick, Bevis of Hampton.*

These, like Layamon's *Brut,* were English or Danish in origin, and had travelled back again to England via France.

Ballad Poetry.—Most compelling in its interest is the rich store of ballad poetry, wild flowers of English verse, that had grown up during the Middle Ages, and were, in the fifteenth century, collected from the country-side and garnered in at the bookshops of Westminster.

The charm of the ballad lies in its naïve simplicity and primitive feeling. To call it artless, as some do, is a mistake, for it has its own rules of diction, its tricks of phrasing, and conventional refrains. But it has the ease and sincerity of genuine poetry, and is deep-rooted in its love of Earth and primal human qualities. Such a line as this would have thrilled Scott :

" And the birk and the broom blooms bonnie "—

And there is the poignancy of Burns in the cry of Margaret to her dead lover in *Clerk Saunders :*

" Is there ony room at your head, Saunders ?
Is there ony room at your feet ?
Is there ony room at your side, Saunders ?
Where fain, fain I wad sleep."

Homely pathos, old time magic, a fierce love of independence, and a brooding sense of tragedy—these are the things that meet us in such pieces as *The Nut-Brown Maid, Chevy Chace, The Bonny Earl*

of Murray; while the love of outdoor life and the changing seasons meet us in the Robin Hood ballads, and such lyrics as the well-known "Sumer is icumen in, Lhude sing cuccu."

The term ballad is used to cover a wide variety of verse, but the word originally signified a dance-song;[1] and many ballads eloquent of love, youth, and the springtide were sung by the villagers at their feasting times to a rhythmic measure.

What ballads we have are the product of Saxon intensity of feeling, softened and lightened by Norman sentiment and grace; though the ballad measure is of ancient origin, and probably dates from early mediæval times.

Early History and Philosophy.—If Geoffrey of Monmouth is the popular historian of the age, William of Malmesbury is the scholarly one. His account of the kings of England is marked by scrupulous care in dealing with ascertained facts, eschewing fantastic legends. Glanville and Bracton contribute to the making of constitutional law; the former from the practical, the latter from the theoretical standpoint. Roger Bacon, a Franciscan friar, is one of the earliest scientists, and in a frankly unscientific and credulous age is noted for the insistence he laid upon the supreme value of experiment.

Gower and Chaucer.—Contemporary literary judgments are seldom of value. Ben Jonson was rated by his age above Shakespeare, and his own generation failed to appreciate Milton. So we need not be surprised to find Chaucer's friend, John Gower, placed on a higher pedestal than the author of *The Canterbury Tales.*

Later judgments perhaps have unduly depreciated Gower. He was a writer of much talent, and his important poem, the *Confessio Amantis* (*c.* 1393), by its

[1] From *ballare*, to dance.

sweeping and varied collection of mediæval tales, certainly prepared the way for Chaucer. It is very useful pioneer work. His inferiority to Chaucer is shown in the uncertain way in which he uses the vernacular, still preferring on the whole the " polite " tongue of the day—French.

Chaucer.—*The Man and His Career.*—Geoffrey Chaucer, born of the merchant class, spent his early life in London, by the Walbrook stream ; and at seventeen he was appointed page to the wife of Lionel, son of Edward III. In this way he gained acquaintance with Court life and manners. After a military expedition to France in 1359, which led to his capture by the French and subsequent ransom for sixteen pounds by Edward, he became first a personal attendant of the King ; later on a squire. He saturated himself in the French Romances—notably the *Roman de la Rose*—and promptly and naturally imitated them. In 1370 Chaucer travelled abroad in the king's service, to Flanders, France, and Italy—to the Italy of Giotto, Petrarch, and Boccaccio ; in short, to the world of the early Renascence. Need we be surprised that the sojourn in Italy profoundly impressed the imagination of the English poet. Hitherto he had been ignorant of Italian literature ; now he reads the great writers, and the glamour of the *Roman de la Rose* fades away.

Not one but many are the visits paid to Italy, and in the meantime we find Chaucer fulfilling the prosaic duties of Comptroller of Customs at Aldgate ; living much as Hawthorne lived his consular life at Liverpool, a business and practical man on one side, and a dreamer of dreams on the other. It was at this time that he wrote *The Parlement of Foules* (1382), the translation of *Boethius, Troilus and Criseyde* (1382), *The House of Fame* (1384), and *The Legend of Good Women* (1385). And over them all is the magic of the South. But the Italian, like the French inspiration,

begins to die away. The rich concrete qualities of the man begin to clamour for a more temperamental utterance, and during the closing years of the fourteenth century he gives us *The Canterbury Tales*. It is possible that Boccaccio's *Decameron* may have suggested the framework of the poem—the succession of story-tellers. But for the subject-matter the poet has gone directly to the life of his own day.

The Form of the Canterbury Tales.—Of this work about 17,000 lines are in verse, while two stories—the tale of *Melibeus* and *The Parson's Tale*—are in prose. The verse consists of rhymed couplets. It forms a compromise between the old and new prosody. Chaucer does not care for alliteration or doggerel rhyme, and chooses the form of " heroic " verse, with rhymed couplets and five accented syllables.

The tales themselves are of astonishing variety. Some are drawn from the romances of chivalry—*e.g. The Knight's Tale*. Others deal with moralizing scriptural stories—*e.g. The Monk's Tale*. Some are fine adaptations of romantic stories of ancient France. There are, between the stories, prologues, in which Chaucer's gift of sharp and vivid characterization is best seen—*e.g.* the *Discourse of the Wife of Bath*.

The Characterization.—When the prevailing tendency of the age to deal in allegory and abstractions is taken into consideration, it is astounding how alive these Chaucerian types are.

For in the course of his life he had come into contact with them all. The Knight, the Squire, the Merchant, the Sailor, Scholar, Doctor, Monk, Labourers, Saints, and Knaves—he knew them intimately and drew them from personal observation. He knew the Court folk ; he knew the People ; and he draws them for us with all their little tricks and mannerisms and external peculiarities. We recognize one by the raucous tone of the voice, another by his rubicund face, another for her sensitiveness : she was so

GEOFFREY CHAUCER

From a pen-drawing after the Ellesmere Manuscript by E. Heber Thompson

" pitous " she wept to see a mouse caught. We see the parchment face of the Knave, the jolly rubicund countenance of mine Host,—we become acquainted, in a word, with the mediæval Englishman as he moved and lived, depicted with a breadth of vision and a rich tolerant humour unsurpassed in our literature. The poignant note that we find in Langland is absent, for Chaucer takes rather the comedy view of life ; but this must not be held to imply any lack of sympathy with the poor and suffering. There is a large-hearted charity in his treatment of the labouring class, as his picture of the Ploughman will testify.

And there is an open-air atmosphere about it all. His people are always vital. Never do they become shadowy or lifeless. They shout and swear, and laugh and weep, interrupt the story-teller, pass compliments, and in general behave themselves as we might expect them in the dramatic circumstances of the narrative. And it is never possible to confuse the story-teller ; each is distinct and inimitable, whether it be the sermonizing Pardoner, the hot-tempered Miller, or the exuberantly vivacious Wife of Bath, who has had five husbands but, experience teaching her that husbands are transient blessings, has fixed her mind on a sixth !

There are tragedies as well as comedies in the Tales ; some are grave and subdued, others ablaze with colour and merriment. But the thread of honest and kindly laughter runs through them all, serious and gay alike.

There is nothing of the dreamer about Chaucer—nothing of the stern moralist and social reformer. Like Shakespeare, he makes it his business in *The Canterbury Tales* to paint life as he sees it, and leaves others to draw the moral.

Langland's mordant pictures of contemporary life gave an actuality to poetical literature which removed it far from the old heroic stories with which the name of poet had hitherto been connected. And

Chaucer realized what those who followed him for many years to come were too blind to see—that the genius of the English people did not lie in high-flown tales of sentiment, but in homely stories of everyday life, illumined by shrewd observation, tolerant humour, and occasional moralizing.

And the crowning glory of *The Canterbury Tales* lies in the fact that in this masterpiece he uses " naked words in English." He has made the new language throb with life, and put the corner-stone on the edifice of English Mediæval Literature.

CHAPTER II

The English Renascence (1400–1660)

In Italy and Germany a stirring of fresh life, a kindling of new desires, a spiritual expansion of human experience, were already potent influences. We call this wider outlook the Renascence, though each nation expressed it in its own way. In Italy it speaks through the senses; in Germany it becomes a moral message. The literary student may judge of the distinctive atmosphere of the two countries by reading the *Fra Lippo Lippi* and *Johannes Agricola* of Robert Browning. In England the spirit of the Renascence is more slowly felt, and not until the close of the fifteenth century can we find much sign of its influence.

While it is impossible to reduce this Renascence spirit to a cut and dried formula, it is possible to distinguish in it two leading inspirations; the one, the intellectual impulse resulting from the study of the classics; the other, the imaginative impulse given to men's minds by the geographical discoveries. It was the spiritual fusion between the old and the new world that gave birth to the Renascence—the old world of Greece and Rome, and the new world across the wide seas.

The Renascence in England is felt first of all in educational centres, such as the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge; and its earlier exponents are earnest and strenuous scholars like Roger Ascham, Sir John

Cheke, Nicholas Udall: men who regarded sober citizenship and moral worth as being of more account than graces of style and beauty of expression. But gradually, as the reading of ancient literature awoke a keen appreciation of the melody of language, and the adventurous spirit of the time warmed the imagination of Englishmen, we have the pulsing of a fresher and more vigorous life in our poetry and prose.

Meanwhile there is a transitional period in our literature, which is chiefly of significance to the student, as showing how the seeds were sown for the rich flowering time of the Elizabethan Age.

Chaucer's impecunious friend, Thomas Hoccleve, and John Lydgate, a monk at Bury, give us in their writings some vivid pictures of London life; and the uncouth figure of the Norfolk cleric, John Skelton, stands out as a doggerel writer of rude power, who helped to pave the way for the new poetry. But the freshest and most individual verse of the time comes from Scotland, where the national spirit had recently been kindled to an ardent flame by the hardly acquired independence at Bannockburn.

Scottish Nature Poets.—John Barbour sings of Freedom, with all the passionate conviction of Shelley. James the First, a diligent student of Chaucer, has in the *Kingis Quhair*[1] given us in Chaucerian stanzas work instinct with a genuine love of Nature, and a meditative charm not to be found in any of his contemporaries. After him the schoolmaster, Robert Henryson, may be remembered also for his description of Nature and his vigorous morality. One of his best poems is quaintly entitled *Garment of Good Ladies*. Most remarkable of all are William Dunbar and Gavin Douglas. Douglas excelled in his description of Scottish scenery, Dunbar in his rough but genuine humour.

Turning from poetry to prose, there is nothing to

[1] *Quire*, or *book*.

note of first-class importance until we come to the work of CAXTON and SIR THOMAS MALORY'S *Morte d'Arthur*. This book is of special significance. Not only did it give unity and artistic form to the various and scattered legends of Arthurian Romance, but it introduced these stories to thousands who would never have come across them. Written in a prose style of simple rhythmic charm, it is a veritable delight to all lovers of Romance ; and its persuasive magic has inspired some of the finest poets of our time.

From *The Paston Letters* (1422–1509), the chit-chat of a county family, we gather incidentally how considerable is the growth of interest in classical learning. The *Utopia* (1516) of SIR THOMAS MORE, written originally in Latin, supplies us with a wonderful picture of the effect of the Renascence spirit in stimulating the social ideals of thoughtful Englishmen. If to his book we add Lord Berners's translation of *Froissart* (1523–25), we cover the most remarkable products of the Transitional period.

We are now on the eve of the English Renascence—a time of imaginative splendour, which lasted with few fluctuations until the coming of Milton.

I. THE DRAMA

In a crude and clumsy form the Drama had existed long before the sixteenth century; the Elizabethans transformed it into a thing of force and beauty. Yet it is curious to find how poor an opinion the Elizabethan had of the dramatic art. Even Shakespeare, who considered carefully the publication of his poems, treated his dramatic scrip with careless contempt. The Play was something to be seen—not to be read. An appreciation of this fact explains to some extent the loose construction of many of the dramas, as well as the note of violence and coarseness so persistently

struck. It was an age when bear-baiting and cock-fighting were favourite sports ; when cruelty and bloodshed were a part of our ritual of mirth, and the Tower, " London's lasting shame," as Gray called it, dark with years and sinister with secrets, served as the symbol at once of despotic power and princely magnificence. Indeed, when we consider the character of the playgoers, and the persistent demand for horseplay and brutality, we can only marvel that the genius of our greater men—of Marlowe, Shakespeare, and Ben Jonson—rose so often superior to the demand of the moment. Not the least of our national debt to Shakespeare is due to the way in which he helped to widen our vision and mellow our sympathies. In an age which hated the Jew as an alien and moral monstrosity, he gave us a Shylock ; and to a generation that revered above all the man of action, he gave a Hamlet.

Roughly speaking, it may be said that the Drama was born under the shadow of the Church and nurtured for religious purposes. The value of the spectacular appeal in an age when printing was unknown is of profound importance. And had not the Church fostered the Drama for her own purposes during the Middle Ages, it would not have become such a force in the age of the Renascence.

The Development of the Drama.—*First Stage.*—Obviously, Drama is inherent in the very ritual of the Church ; for the Mass itself is a doctrinal point presented in spectacular form. In order to familiarize men and women with the stories of the Bible these were acted from time to time—the season of the year determining the nature of the play. Stories which were taken from the Bible were called *Mysteries ;* those taken from the lives of the Saints, *Miracle Plays.*

Second Stage.—The second stage is reached when the play emerges from the church into the market-place. This was effected when the Gilds were en-

trusted with the performances in the fourteenth century. It was customary for each craft to represent a play according to its particular trade. For instance, the Fishermen presented the Flood ; the Vintners, the Marriage at Cana. The work was very seriously taken by the Gilds, lack of competence and unpunctuality being met by heavy fines.

Performances were given on cars or scaffolds in the open spaces of the town. There was no attempt at scenery, but attention was given to stage properties. There was a monstrous head with movable jaws to represent Hell ; and, in addition to a rich costume, the actor had some symbol to denote his part—*e.g.* St. Stephen had a stone ; God was symbolized by the Papal dress.

The play of *Noah* gives us some insight into the nature of these plays, and shows the blending of rough English humour with didactic purpose. For though the drama had its source in sacred story, in the *method* of telling we can trace the influence of the old English amusements—the Pageants and May Games, the horse-play of the Juggler, and the quips of the Jester.

Noah having finished his Ark informs his wife of the fact, and begs her to enter. Dame Noah, however, having determined to go on a jaunt with a crony, declines the invitation with some finality of manner. After an altercation, in which the services of the son Japhet are enlisted, she is compelled to enter. But no sooner is she in than in a true shrewish spirit she boxes her husband's ears ! And he finds, poor man, that although sheltered from one storm he has exposed himself to another.

On the whole, Miracle Plays proved more popular than Mysteries, probably on account of their fresher subject-matter. Each big town had its own Cycle of plays—*e.g.* York, Chester, Coventry.

Third Stage.—The third stage is reached when the

Mystery and Miracle Play give place to the Morality and Interlude. In the Mystery and Miracle, serious and comic elements were interwoven. Now they part: the Morality presenting the serious and the Interlude the lighter side of things. The Morality was frankly didactic, dealing in abstractions and allegory. The characters typified certain qualities—*e.g.* Sin, Grace, Repentance. The Interlude aimed merely at amusement. Famous examples of both types of play are found in *Everyman* and *The Four P's of Heywood.*[1]

Moralities continued to flourish up to the end of the sixteenth century, and were popular even in the heyday of Shakespeare's fame.

Fourth Stage.—The fourth stage sees the beginning of English tragedy; for Tragedy preceded Comedy, in England as in Greece. We have reached now the influence of the Renascence, and see the effect of classical influences. Seneca's Tragedies, with their earnest and strenuous atmosphere, attracted the writers of the day; and *Gorboduc,* the first English drama, is the result. This was written by Sackville and Norton, and played before Elizabeth at Whitehall in 1562. When published it was called *Ferrex and Pollux.* Its intrinsic merits are slight, for it was frankly imitative, and its verse is stiff and lifeless. But the classical model served to give some form and coherence to the crude shapelessness of the drama at the time.

Of more importance at this period was the development of English Comedy, as exemplified by *Ralph Roister Doister* (*c.* 1566) and *Gammer Gurton's Needle* (1575), plays rich in English humour; the first (the better of the two) showing a keen sense of dramatic movement.

One thing is clear from these works, namely, the gradual approximation of the drama to the life of the day—especially the comedy side. There is real vital-

[1] A *Pardoner*, a *Pedlar*, a *Palmer*, a *Poticary*.

ity, but so far little literary grace or power. This gift, however, was now to be bestowed.

The initial stages of this glorification are due to a new school that had arisen, called "The University Wits"—a professional set of literary men. Of this little constellation, Marlowe is the central sun, and round him revolved as minor stars Lyly, Greene, Peele, Lodge, and Nash.

Marlowe.—Christopher Marlowe was born in Canterbury of humble stock, and dreamed his early dreams in the cathedral city. Later on he went to London, where he varied his literary work with reckless bursts of dissipation, and died in an inglorious brawl at Deptford in 1593.

With little of Greene's power for actualizing the life of the day, or Lodge's clear-cut characterization, Marlowe had a wealth of poetry in him far transcending that of any contemporary save Shakespeare.

What did he do?

He raised both the matter and manner of the drama to a higher level. In the first place by seizing large, serious subjects for treatment, that appealed to the imagination; in the second place by turning blank verse, which he found stiff and unyielding, into a thing of delicate and plastic beauty. Compare these lines from *Gorboduc*—

"O hard and cruel hap, that thus assigned
Unto so worthy a wight so wretched end;
But most hard, cruel heart, that could consent
To lend the hateful destinies that hand
By which, alas, so heinous crime was wrought"—

with these from *Faustus*—

"Was this the face that launched a thousand ships
And burnt the topless towers of Ilium?
Sweet Helen, make me immortal with a kiss.
. . . . . .
Oh, thou art fairer than the evening air
Clad in the beauty of a thousand stars!"

How did he work this transformation ?

He found blank verse consisting of lines, each ending with an accented monosyllable ; each line standing nervelessly by itself. He modified the rhythmic pauses, changed the accents, made the metre suit the subject instead of fitting the subject to the metre, and in his own words bade farewell " to the jigging veins of rhyming mother-wits, and such conceits as clownage keeps in pay." Moreover, he gave, what the elder plays lacked, form and coherence to his subject.

His Plays. — *Tamburlaine.* — Tamburlaine is a Scythian peasant who becomes a mighty monarch, until at last, drunk with the blood of his enemies and his own insatiable ambition, he is smitten with sickness by the Gods.

Faustus.—Faustus, like Paracelsus, aspires to all knowledge, and sells his soul to gain it. The story here is of the Middle Ages, though Marlowe gave it a Renascence setting, transforming the anxious alchemist into an ardent idealist, and softening the material horrors of the mediæval version.

The Jew of Malta.—This play lacks the pictorial splendour of *Tamburlaine*, and the imaginative beauty of *Faustus*, but has a superb opening scene, and presents a remarkable study of avaricious passion.

Edward II.—Edward II. is on another plane entirely. It has nothing of the glitter and pomp of the earlier plays, but it is incomparably better constructed , and shows more psychological power.

Marlowe saw clearly enough that the Romantic Drama was suited to the needs of the nation, and that therefore no other form of drama could express so well its abundant, concrete life. But he saw also that for the Romantic Drama to be a thing of beauty as well as a force, the medium of blank verse must be chosen. No finer tribute was paid him than that given by Michael Drayton, in *Epistles of Poets and Poesy* (1627) :

"Neat[1] Marlowe, bathèd in the Thespian springs,
Had in him those brave translunary things
That the first poets had: his raptures were
All air and fire which made his verses clear;
For that fair madness still he did retain
Which rightly should possess a poet's brain."

"Fair madness" is a satisfying phrase, fit to rank beside the noble suggestion of Keats, that "Poetry should surprise by a fine excess."

He had, of course, the defects of the temperament of his age; a frequent over-luxuriance of imagination, a lack of restraint, and extravagance bordering on the ridiculous. But no criticism can obscure the greatness of his genius. He found the drama crude and chaotic; he left it a great force in English literature.

Marlowe's genius did not incline him much to the lyric, though his famous *Passionate Shepherd* shows what he could do in this direction. But his fragmentary narrative poem, *Hero and Leander*, has a fresh sensitive beauty transcending the coarser magnificence of young Shakespeare's *Venus and Adonis*. The haunting line, "Who ever loved that loved not at first sight?" lingered long in Shakespeare's memory.

The other writers of Marlowe's group, though markedly inferior, must not be overlooked, for one and all contributed in some measure to the transformation of the drama, in which Marlowe was the chief factor. Lyly gave it literary grace, Peele informed blank verse with a sweetness and melody second only to that of Marlowe. Two of his most notable plays were the *Battle of Alcazar* and *David and Bathsheba*,—

David. "Now comes my lover tripping like the roe
And brings my longings tangled in her hair,
To joy her love I'll build a kingly bower
Seated in hearing of a hundred streams."

[1] Ingenuous.

The plays of Greene, Lodge, and Nash show less skill in the manipulation of blank verse, and less sustained beauty. On the other hand they have abundant vitality and vigour, and both Greene and Lodge were, of course, melodious and accomplished song writers.

Thomas Kyd followed the Senecan School very closely, and is largely responsible for the "blood and thunder" element in the Elizabethan drama. He ranks below his contemporaries in dramatic and poetic power. But he did his share in breaking away from the pedantic dullness of *Gorboduc*.

The Theatre.—Council chambers, guild halls, the yards of inns, were the theatres of the early Elizabethans. The Queen had her Company of Players, and most of the noblemen theirs.

The first regular theatre, "The Theatre,"[1] was built at Blackfriars by James Burbage in 1576. Afterwards came the "Curtain,"[2] in Shoreditch; the Globe, in Southwark—the famous "Wooden O—" 1599; the Fortune, in Shoreditch. Performances took place daily in the early afternoon, and lasted for about a couple of hours.

These early theatres were large wooden sheds, partly thatched with rushes, a flagstaff on the roof, and surrounded by a trench. They clustered round the swampy ground beside the Thames, and gave rise to a good deal of vexation to quiet citizens in the neighbourhood. For around these playhouses in the afternoons the narrow, tortuous streets were so crowded by a noisy, frivolous concourse that "business suffered in the shops, processions and funerals were obstructed, and perpetual causes of complaint arose."

But despite objections by the residents and bitter criticism by the Puritans, theatres multiplied rapidly. In the majority of theatres the auditorium, as in

[1] Many of Marlowe's plays were performed here.

[2] So called from the land on which it was built, called "The Curtene."

ancient Greece, was open to the sky, only the stage being roofed. Thus the pleasure of sight-seeing was of a doubtful kind in bad weather.

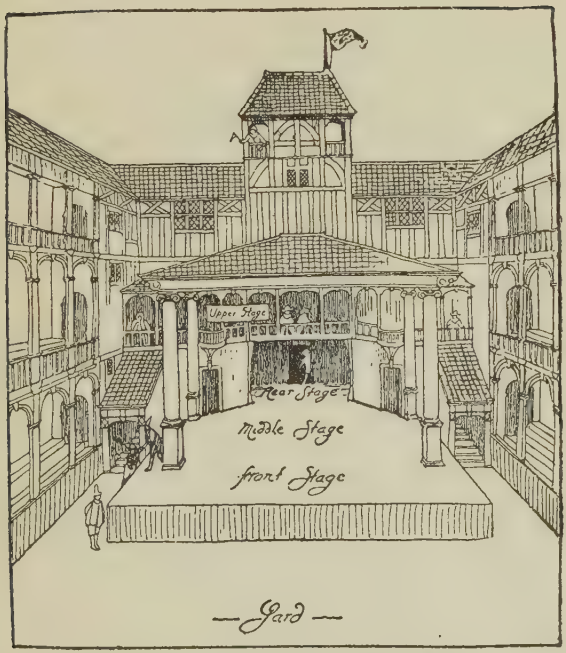
There were no tickets. A penny (about ninepence in our money) admitted to standing room in the yard. Rich spectators watched the performance from boxes on each side of the stage, paying about fifteen shillings in modern reckoning for the privilege of a seat. In the upper proscenium box were the orchestra of the Globe, the largest in London, composed of ten performers, with drum and trumpets for the martial scenes, oboes and flutes to suggest the sentimental passages.

The fashionable part of the house was on the stage itself. There sat the royal patrons of the theatre, Essex and Southampton, with their friends. Failing seats, these gentlemen sprawled upon the rush-strewn boards, over which they spread their rich cloaks. Here also sat the dramatic poets of the time, to whom was accorded a free pass. Most important of all to us were the shorthand writers, commissioned by piratical booksellers, who took down the dialogue, under pretence of criticizing it, and thus preserved for posterity many plays that would otherwise have been lost.

The giving of a tragedy was signalized by draping the stage with black; for a comedy blue hangings were substituted. A placard hung upon one of the stage doors bore the legend of "Venice" or "Verona," as the case might be; no other indication was there of the *mise-en-scène*. In the battle scenes an entire army scurried in and out through a single door. One can understand the apology of the Prologue in *Henry V.*:

> "Can this cockpit hold
> The vasty fields of France? or may we cram
> Within this wooden O the very casque
> That did affright the air at Agincourt?"

No women ever appeared on the stage, but many women attended the theatre. The Queen sum-



THE FORTUNE THEATRE

(With acknowledgment to the publishers of "Shakespeare's Englana.")

moned the players to Court on special festivals—Twelfth Night, and so on. In comparing the Elizabethan stage with our own this should be remembered: the modern stage is a picture stage in a frame called the Proscenium; the Elizabethan stage was a platform stage thrust forth into the Auditorium, and surrounded on three sides—certainly—by spectators. There was little or no scenic accessory in Shakespeare's day—descriptive passages supplying its place, but much money was spent on costumes.

Shakespeare.—Born in April 1564, at Stratford-on-Avon, the son of a well-to-do burgess, William Shakespeare married in 1583 and came to London somewhere between 1587 and 1592. His father's fortunes had declined, and his unhappy early marriage to Anne Hathaway, combined with the lack of employment, were probably instrumental in driving the youth from country lanes to the streets of London. Another factor in impelling him Londonwards may have been the visit of the Queen's players in 1587, turning his thoughts stagewards. Be that as it may, to London he came, and about 1594 there is mention of him as belonging to the Lord Chamberlain's Company. Actor, re-shaper of old plays, poet, dramatist, and manager, such are the chief phases in his career. Little as we know about the facts of his life, we can gather that, together with extraordinary creative powers, he must have combined a shrewd and businesslike capacity for ordering his affairs.

About 1612 there is reason to suppose he returned to Stratford, and he lived there with his daughter until 1616, when he died of a fever.

The period of Shakespeare's literary activity extends over twenty-four years (1588–1612), and this may be broken up into four sub-periods.

The First Period (1588–94).—Here historical plays predominate. He continues the work of Marlowe, and essays to mirror the broad national features of Plan-

tagenet life. The one tragedy, *Romeo and Juliet*, is essentially a young man's tragedy, strong in lyric beauty though lacking the grandeur and breadth of the later tragedies; while *The Merchant of Venice*, though in form a comedy, is in a sombre framework of tragic irony, relieved by a golden thread of romance.

For the rest, he writes in buoyant spirits a social extravaganza, *Love's Labour's Lost;* a rollicking farce, *The Comedy of Errors* (1592); a sentimental romance, *Two Gentlemen of Verona* (1591); and a fantastic romance, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (1594–95).

Marlowe and Greene probably had a share in the *Henry VI.* plays; Marlowe frankly inspired *Richard III.* and *Richard II.; King John* being the first of the historical plays which shows an emergence from the domination of Marlowe.

The Second Period (1594–1600).—Shakespeare has now found himself. There are three historical plays here, finer in quality than those preceding, the two plays of *Henry IV.* (1597) and *Henry V.* (1598). *Henry V.* is the more showy, and has been well described as a "National Anthem in five acts"; but the *Henry IV.* plays are far richer in humour and psychological power. Of the comedies, *The Taming of the Shrew* (1595) and *The Merry Wives of Windsor* (1598) are cast in the early farcical vein, though the handling is easier and stronger; *Much Ado about Nothing* (1599) is on a higher plane of wit; while in *As You Like It* (1600) and *Twelfth Night* (1600), humour and romance blend in perfect proportion.

To this period belong the Sonnets, printed later in 1609. There are two series, the first addressed to a young man, one to whom Shakespeare had been deeply attached; the second concerns a woman, one who may have played the part of an evil genius in the poet's life. For simple intensity of feeling and variety of expression, they are, as love sonnets, unrivalled in our language.

THE THIRD PERIOD (1600–08).—In the third period Tragedy predominates, and we reach here the culminating point of Shakespeare's power as a dramatist. The romances of the period, *All's Well that Ends Well* (1595), *Measure for Measure* (1604), and *Troilus and Cressida* (1603), are essentially tragedies set in a key of forced comedy; they are rich in poetry, but leave a confused and unpleasant impression upon the mind.

Incomparably greater are the Tragedies. Starting in grave measured style with *Julius Cæsar* (1608), he rises to greater heights of drama and reflective poetry in *Hamlet* (1602); while in that great trilogy of plays, *Othello* (1604), *King Lear* (1605), and *Macbeth* (1606), imaginative subtlety and passionate intensity make these dramas the most superb and compelling in our literature.

THE FOURTH PERIOD (1608–12).—The last period opens with Tragedy. *Antony and Cleopatra* (1608), with weaker dramatic grip than its immediate predecessors, but fully as ripe in the strength of its characterization. *Coriolanus* (1609), *Timon of Athens* (1608), and *Pericles* (1608), are only fitfully remarkable; but when in the eventide of his career he turned again to his first love, Romance, we get *Cymbeline* (1610), *The Tempest* (1611), and *The Winter's Tale* (1611).

The tragic period has left behind it a legacy of spiritual power and imaginative subtlety which make the last works of the dramatist a fitting pæan of farewell.

Nature of the Shakespearean Drama.—In Shakespearean drama almost every phase of the life of the age is mirrored, from the particular craze and fashion of the moment to the broad, general characteristics of the national life.

Thus *Love's Labour's Lost* (1591) was in its inception a social satire dealing with the fashions and fads of the

day. Euphuism [1] and extravagance in dress are derided with as much topicality of allusion as a play by Bernard Shaw would show to-day. The Elizabethan pedant figures amusingly in Holofernes, who has been " at a great feast of languages and stolen the scraps." Hotspur's speeches abound in reference to current fashions—*e.g.* he speaks of velvet guards on the dress of fashionable city ladies, and there are many references in the plays to favourite games and sports —*e.g.* the mention of tennis in *Henry V.*

And just as he deals with ephemeral fads and crazes and some passing event, so does he deal on a much larger scale with the broad phases of Elizabethan national life. The dull-witted country constable is held up for ridicule in *Love's Labour's Lost* and *Much Ado about Nothing.* The elaborate ritual of Court life is depicted in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *Antony and Cleopatra ;* its trickeries and pretentiousness in *Hamlet, Timon of Athens,* and *Cymbeline.*

How clearly is reflected in the plays the wholehearted belief of the people at large in good and bad spirits. Hamlet asks the Ghost :

" Be thou a spirit of health or goblin damned—
Bring with thee airs from heaven or blasts from hell ? "

And *Macbeth* is set in a similar background of witchcraft. Or to illustrate from his romantic plays—the fairy beings in the wood near Athens, the spirits that obeyed the behests of Prospero, were, we may be sure, as real to many of Shakespeare's audiences as Helena and Miranda.

In all of these matters Shakespeare was of his age. That is the Elizabethan side of him. An astute borrower, with a ready eye for a good plot wherever he might chance to find it ; a skilful reader of the pulse of the public ; a gentle, sensitive, sensuous and somewhat

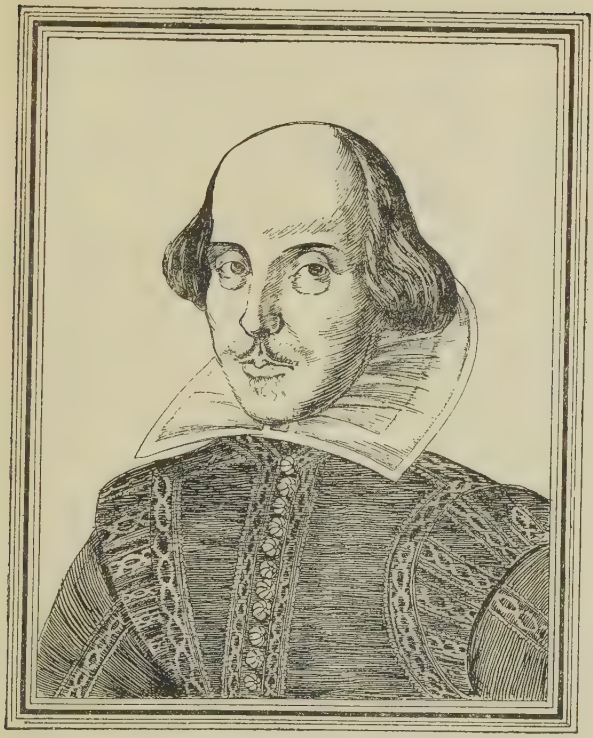
[1] See page 77.

melancholy man ; often called upon, against the grain we may conjecture, to satisfy the rough taste of the " groundlings."

But there is the universal side of the man. He was of his age ; but he was also of the ages. And this by virtue, not so much of his dramatic power, which often suffers through the loose texture of his work, but of his incomparable poetry and insight into human nature. He is the supreme poet in an age of great poetry, because his poetry is wider in range and deeper in feeling than that of his contemporaries. He touches every mood : of graceful sentiment, as in the romantic comedies ; of delicate fantasy, as in the fairy plays ; of philosophic meditation, as in the tragedies of the mid-period ; and of poignant passion, as in the later tragedies. In the verse that bodies forth such primal things as love, hate, hope, despair, courage, endurance, Shakespeare towers above his fellows. And when we think of Lear in his desolation, of Othello in his last anguish, of Macbeth in his soul agony, and the despair of Cleopatra—we think of English literature at its grandest.

Of his insight into character, it may be said that a ready test of the actuality of his characters is the impression they make on the modern reader. Portia, Rosalind, Beatrice, Cleopatra, Juliet, are startlingly modern. Place them beside the women of Sheridan or Goldsmith, and you realize how the latter are dated and how alive and fresh are the former. Beside them even the women of Dickens and Thackeray seem old-fashioned. And the reason is that Shakespeare's women have the primal qualities of womanhood common to every age, and therefore can never be dated.

And there is subtlety no less than actuality. Are not the nervous breakdowns of Richard III. and Macbeth, the contrary moods of Cleopatra, indicated with rare delicacy of effect ? With what masterly touches



WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

From a pen-drawing after the Droeshout Engraving by E. Heber Thompson

the figure of rash, hot-tempered Harry Percy is drawn. How impatient he is about the medical advice on the field of battle :

" . . . He made me mad
To see him shine so brisk and smell so sweet,
And talk so like a waiting gentlewoman :
Of guns and drums and wounds—God save the mark !—
And telling me, the sovereign'st thing on earth
Was parmaceti for an inward bruise ! "

While with unerring insight Shakespeare differentiates such vital rogues as Falstaff the Tavern haunter, and Autolycus the Vagabond of the fields.

Ben Jonson.—*The Man.*—A clever boy at Westminster School, probably of Scottish origin, who attracted the attention of Camden the historian ; a bricklayer who studied Juvenal and Horace while plastering walls, a soldier in Flanders, a duellist, an actor, a poet, a playwright—such is a brief summary of Jonson's career. Personally a tall, stalwart man, hearty in his likes and dislikes as in his eating and drinking ; satirical yet affectionate ; domineering yet free from jealousy—sincere, direct, brave, quarrelsome —such a man was " rare Ben Jonson."

His Methods.—Unlike his contemporary Marlowe, he is largely a maker of comedy. Unlike Shakespeare, he is content to satirize men and women rather than to present them in their entirety. He is a moralist in the first place, artist afterwards. But his scope is very wide, comprehending tragedy—*Sejanus* (1603), *Catiline* (1611)—masques, comedies, farces. Under James I. he was literary dictator, the leading spirit at the Mermaid Tavern, numbering among his friends Shakespeare, Beaumont and Fletcher, Chapman, Herrick, Camden, and Bacon.

His Technical Skill.—At the outset of his career he refurbished old plays in the romantic manner ; but this ill-suited him. Shakespeare when manager helped

him at a critical point in his career by staging his comedy, *Every Man in his Humour*—where not only the individual anti-romantic note is clearly struck, but his skill in construction is first seen. Perhaps the best example of his dramatic construction is in the comedy of *Volpone*, where Jonson exposes the vice of cupidity with relentless but finely sustained satire. Dryden looked upon this play as the most admirably constructed specimen of modern dramatic art. But another comedy, technically almost as satisfying as *Volpone*, is *The Silent Woman*, where a number of intrigues are blended with rare skill, and the interest steadily accumulates from scene to scene.

With all his admiration of Shakespeare, Jonson disliked the easy-going selection of plots dear to his great contemporary. His advice to younger dramatists on this point is certainly sound, for he reprehends those who " waylay all the old books they can hear of, in print or otherwise, to fare their scenes withal . . . as if their imagination lived wholly upon another man's trencher."

Detailed Observation.—There is no more elaborate painter of London life than Jonson. Shakespeare paints with a bigger brush ; but for detailed effects Jonson is supreme. He satirizes vice with the vigour of Molière, but not with his adroitness. Had he lashed less furiously he might have kept a better edge on his rapier. Truly did a friend once say to him, " You write with a porcupine quill dipped into too much gall."

Yet this over-emphasis was certainly not due to any blunted observation. His similes are neat and happy. For instance, this of an ill-bred man :

> " He minds
> A curtesy no more than London Bridge
> Which arch was mended last."

And when he keeps his didacticism in check, as in

that amusing farce *Bartholomew Fair*, his observant humour finds abundant scope.

Zeal of the Land Busy abhors Fairs and all their vanities, but is discovered " fast by the teeth in the cold turmey pie . . . with a great white loaf on his left hand and glass of Malmsey on his right." Later on he moralizes (*à la* Pecksniff at Todger's) about his food. " We may be religious in the midst of the profane, so it be eaten with a reformed mouth."

His Graceful Fancy.—In imaginative intensity Jonson is inferior not only to Shakespeare, but to Marlowe, Webster, Beaumont and Fletcher, and other contemporaries. But he had a graceful fancy which showed to rich advantage in the Masques ; and here and there it lightens up the Comedies with luminous flashes.

His last work, *The Sad Shepherd*, contains some of his pleasantest conceits. The shepherd laments his charming Earine ; spring had died with her, and since then earth has borne but thorns :

" Here she was wont to go, and here, and here,
Just where those daisies, pinks, and violets grow :
The world may find the spring by following her . . ."

His lyrics have sweetness and abundant grace. As instances, there are the songs, " O do not wanton with those eyes," the " Celia " cycle, and the familiar paraphrase from Philistrates, " Drink to me only . . ."

His mind and imagination never fused with the white heat of creative passion, as was the case with Shakespeare, but he exercised a wholesome effect on the drama where Romanticism had been carried too far.

This indifference to form, this careless exuberance of treatment, mattered little in the hands of Shakespeare. Instinct there often took the place of rules and conventions. But Shakespeare's method could found no school, and imitation of him led to disaster.

The more deliberate observation of Jonson, his adherence to classical conventions, his careful scholarship, his insistence upon a clear appreciation of what the writer wished to express—all these matters were of serious importance to writers who had talent but no genius.

The influence of Jonson lasted well on into the eighteenth century.

Of the crowd of dramatists who succeeded Shakespeare and Ben Jonson, it is impossible to speak save in the briefest fashion. A few of them, Beaumont and Fletcher, and Thomas Heywood for instance, were more voluminous than even Jonson. Heywood boasted that he had had " an entire hand, or at least a finger " in two hundred and twenty plays. Small wonder that with this productiveness few of the plays bear to be read except in snatches. They were for the most part hurriedly produced to meet the continual demand for fresh drama ; and were composed frankly to please an audience, not to interest the student.

But around this crowd of names a few detach themselves by virtue of special qualities, and at the head are Beaumont and Fletcher. Marston and Tourneur are more passionate, Webster more poignantly tragic ; Dekker has greater gaiety, Thomas Middleton a more brilliant wit. But for a combination of these characteristics in some measure, Beaumont and Fletcher take the palm. And in one quality they certainly excel their contemporaries—artistic restraint.

The weakness in the majority is the insistence on what is merely horrible and obscene. This is something other than the hearty coarseness of Shakespeare; it is the trick by which a writer seeks to gain preference over his fellows.

Among the most remarkable of these dramas are : (1) for gaiety and vivacity and insight into contemporary life, Beaumont and Fletcher's *Knight of the Burning Pestle—The Spanish Curate—The Wild Goose*

Chase (an Elizabethan version of *Man and Superman*); Middleton's *Changeling*, and Dekker's *Shoemaker's Holiday;* (2) for tragic intensity, Ford's *Broken Heart*, and Webster's *White Devil*, which is superior to his more conventionally pathetic *Duchess of Malfi*.

Towards the historical drama Chapman (the translator of Homer) and Heywood did good work. And in the development of the comedy of manners developed later by the Restoration dramatists, Massinger in his *New Way to Pay Old Debts* (1633) played an important part. He is the forerunner of the brilliant satirists of the Restoration drama.

2. POETRY

Elizabethan poetry has all the freshness and vigour of youthful race. As Wordsworth wrote, of a later period—

> "Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive,
> But to be young was very Heaven."

At first the poets—scholars and courtiers—could do little but stammer with fitful grace. The instrument is there, but they cannot as yet pipe on it. They are embarrassed and self-conscious. But this awkwardness melts away. When we reach Spenser and Sidney, the tentative flutings are over. The music is sweet, spontaneous, full-throated.

And so abundant was the output of poetry, that when the drama had taken all it needed, there was a wealth of melody left over.

The poetry of the age opens with the publication of a volume known as *Tottel's Miscellany* (1557).[1] This

[1] Richard Tottel, a printer who, along with Grimald, a University scholar and chaplain to Ridley, made a collection of verse written by courtiers of Henry VII.

book contained the verse of those ill-fated courtiers, Sir Thomas Wyatt and the Earl of Surrey, and marks the first English poetry of the Renascence.

Of these two names Wyatt's is the more important. Modelling his work upon Italian models, he attempted a great variety of metrical experiments—songs, madrigals, sonnets, elegies ; somewhat imitative, but with touches of grace and fantasy.

Surrey is seen rather as the disciple of Wyatt than an independent force ; though at times his sonnets are more effective than those of Wyatt. Wyatt adhered strictly to the Petrarcan model, used with such fine effect at a later date by Milton, and still more recently by Rossetti. Surrey modified the form, and it was this modification that Shakespeare seized upon in his splendid Sonnet sequence. The Petrarcan form is perhaps the more impressive ; the modified English form the more expressive.

Surrey also translated the second Æneid into blank verse. *This is the first example of blank verse in English.* Rhymed verse hitherto had held undisputed sway ; but one effect of the study of the classics was to lessen the prestige of rhyme. Surrey's blank verse was very unlike the sonorous measure it became in the hands of Marlowe. But it was a step at any rate in the direction of a form of literature in which the greatest Elizabethans won their highest triumphs. Surrey and Wyatt stand in relation to the glory of English poetry under Spenser and Shakespeare as Thomson and Collins do to Wordsworth and Shelley.

Gascoigne, like most of the earlier verse-writers, was a man of breeding and good education. His blank verse is more vigorous than Surrey's, and there is a greater individuality in his lyrics—*Flowers, Herbs, and Weeds* (1575).

Thomas Sackville strikes an even stronger note. Here at last we begin to escape from the stiffness that cramps his immediate predecessors. There is real

music in his verse ; and *The Complaint of Buckinghame* shows both variety and power of pathos.

But there is as yet little indication of that exuberant delight in life afterwards so manifest.

Surrey is inclined to dwell on the little miseries of love ; Gascoigne is largely concerned with sorrow and the underworld ; and Sackville's fancy is quaint rather than ardent, pensive, not joyful.

In fact, the Elizabethan poet, so far, is like Romeo in his early stage of love for Rosaline, which was more or less of a fancy to be embellished with literary tears and sighs.

Sir Philip Sidney, one of the most attractive personalities of the time, strikes a richer and deeper note. Cultured, sensitive, witty and ardent, he spent many years of his life in travel. But in 1578 he settled down in London, and for about ten years, until the time of his death, he devoted himself to literature.

Less brilliant than Marlowe, less witty than Lyly, inferior to Spenser in glamour, and excelled by many a contemporary song-writer in deftness of fancy, he has produced a body of work which for its versatile excellence places him in the foremost rank of his time.

Of his *Arcadia* and its remarkable influence, mention is made elsewhere. Here may be noted the discerning critique—*The Defence of Poesy*—where he uttered those poignant simple words that go to the root of all poetry : " I never heard the old story of Percy and Douglas, that I found not my heart moved more than with a trumpet."

And his quick and sensitive imagination enables him to pluck out the very soul of song. " It is not riming and versing that maketh a poet, no more than a long gowne maketh an advocate, who tho' he pleaded in armour should be an advocate and no soldier."

In poetry it is as a sonneteer that he will be best remembered. Out of his own disappointments in love

he wove a fine cycle of sonnets to "Stella," some of remarkable sweetness :

> "Ring out your belles, let mourning sheaves be spread,
> For love is dead."

Edmund Spenser.—"An over-faint quietness"—wrote Sidney in 1581—"should seem to strew the house for poets."

Hitherto the scholar and courtier had ruled the domain of fantasy with pleasing and graceful, though not very vital results.

But from 1590 to 1600, Sidney's lament about the dearth of poetry dies down. The richness of the drama in those years has already been noticed; their fecundity in poetry was equally remarkable.

And Edmund Spenser is the forerunner of this great movement. He showed to Englishmen the music and beauty of his mother-tongue, as none since Chaucer had shown it.

In early years he wrote the *Shepherd's Calendar*, and nine comedies on Italian models. The comedies have not survived, nor can we regret the fact. Certainly Spenser's talents did not point that way. He lacked the humour and actuality of his great predecessor; and his muse was too wedded to allegory to interest herself in forms other than the Morality.

The Shepherd's Calendar is a medley of twelve pastorals on the months of the year. The form is one made fashionable by Virgil, though copied by him from the Alexandrian Greeks; it was an artificial form of poetry approved by the age, and already taken advantage of by the accomplished Sidney in his *Arcadia*.

There is no real attempt to get at either the beauty or the homeliness of country life as we get it in Wordsworth or Crabbe. It is merely a peg for some robust moralizing, and excellent fantasy and satire.

But the *Shepherd's Calendar* pales in significance beside the *Faërie Queene.*

This poem was neither written in England nor inspired by England. Ireland is the inspiration ; Ireland is the scenic background ; Ireland supplies the stuff of adventure ; Ireland—the troublous, storm-tossed Ireland of Elizabeth's reign.

The enemies of Gloriana were flesh and blood enemies ; the knights came from Elizabeth's Court—were not Raleigh, Ormonde, and Grey of their number ? And for this reason, perhaps, this poem has been called the Epic of the English Wars in Ireland under Elizabeth.

The poem reveals a sober, chaste, and sensitive spirit ; one keenly alive to sensuous beauty, but kept from the grossness and coarseness of some of his brilliant contemporaries by a mind of singular refinement ; and beauty is for him of the supremest value in life. Small wonder that Keats was fired by his verse, for certainly his famous phrase, " A thing of beauty is a joy for ever," is entirely Spenserian in sentiment.

The poem sets out to be a story with twelve knights of Elizabeth who undertake various enterprises in her honour. But the poet had, unlike Chaucer, little gift of narrative, and soon wanders off the main road into the flowery meads of fancy. Starting in the middle of one of the adventures, he never completes his initial design, and the poem is merely a lovely mosaic into which are woven deeds of chivalry and pictorial fantasies, and grave moralizing. From the pleasaunces and excitements of chivalry Spenser takes his ideas ; yet he is not content merely to tell an entertaining story as Tasso and Ariosto had done, but strives to present his visions in a framework of high and noble purpose. Indeed, in a letter to Raleigh he avows his purpose is " to fashion a gentleman . . . in virtuous and gentle discipline."

EDMUND SPENSER

From a pen-drawing by
E. Heber Thompson

What differentiates Spenser from, say, Shakespeare the poet, is the equable calm that pervades even his fervour. Sensitive to every phase of imagination and beauty, there is always a dreamy atmosphere about his verse. The sharp, vivid intensity of Shakespeare is not his ; but he has his own particular charm. For an analogy to Shakespeare's poetry we must turn to Shelley and the more passionate phases of Browning's art. With Spenser, we think of Keats and William Morris.

His genius is epic, not lyric ; he aims to be a story-teller, not a singer. He has something of Homer's ancient simplicity, though not the poignancy. But the similes are primal and direct.

A wounded hero falls

> " . . . as an aged tree,
> High growing on the top of rocky clift."

His is a rich ornate imagination ; yet it rarely becomes turbid and oppressive. If it lacks Marlowe's thrill, it certainly also lacks his violence. It is a thing of prismatic colouring, refracting the white light of common day in delicate rainbow hues. The symbolism behind his faërie music need not trouble us ; and we may enjoy the adventures of his Knight of the Cross defending his beloved Una, almost without realizing that it is the battle between truth and falsehood with which he is concerned.

And yet the mingling of Puritanism and sensuous pleasure is one of the chief charms of his work, just as it was that of a great successor—Milton.

The world of Chivalry supplies him with his poetic imagery. He has drunk of that magical stream of Romance that inspired the old Arthurian cycle. In his company we hear " the horns of Elfland faintly blowing." Through the witchery of his genius the rude legends of the past are bereft of their roughness and barbarity, and shine like polished gems.

The Lyric School.—So far the poetry passed under notice has been of the stately and sentimental kind. To find a livelier mood we must turn to a school of poetry which sprang up about the time of Spenser—the lyric school—and gave expression to the more sensitive moods of the Elizabethan.

The lyric was already a literary force both in Italy and France ; but until 1580 it did not impress itself upon English imagination. What brought about the sudden flowering of the lyric ? To some extent the persistent study of foreign poetry, but chiefly the growing popularity of music.

Such brilliant musicians as Byrd, Tallis, and Dowland needed articulate expression for their sweet lute melodies. The gift of song no doubt was dormant in many an Elizabethan verse-writer. It needed some outside stimulus to call it forth, and assuredly at no time in our history has there been so rich a company of singers ; some already famous in other directions as dramatists or novelists, many quite unknown save for their " short swallow flights of song."

William Byrd is the earliest of these singers, but his verse is characterized by its quaint moralizing rather than by any flight of fancy. Lighter in texture are the Songs of John Dowland, famed for his " heavenly touch upon the lute." In the last years of the sixteenth century he published two volumes of " Songs and Airs." Take this charming snatch from the first volume (1597)—

" Dear, if you change, I'll never choose again ;
Sweet, if you shrink, I'll never think of love ;
Fair, if you fail, I'll judge all beauty vain ;
Wise, if too weak, more wits I'll never prove.
Dear, sweet, fair, wise ! Change, shrink, nor be not weak ;
And, on my faith, my faith shall never break."

Campion distinguished himself in three capacities,

putting aside his fame as a musician. He wrote masques, among the best of their kind ; displayed his nimble wit and scholarship in Latin verse ; and discussed in prose form the values of music and poetry.

Campion's songs are light as thistledown, and float away in the air.

Following these came John Daniel, Robert Jones, Thomas Morley, and in the early years of the seventeenth century a crowd of lyrists, about whom in many cases little is known save for the gay and tender lyrics ascribed to them. Before leaving them we must not overlook the splendid profusion of lyrical wealth to be found in the Elizabethan dramas and masques, from the boisterous humour of *Ralph Roister Doister*, through the work of Lyly, Greene, Lodge, and Nash, the mighty structure of Shakespeare, down to Heywood, Fletcher, and Sir William Davenant. In the post-Shakespearean drama, Beaumont and Fletcher—the best all-round dramatists—are likewise the freshest and most melodious singers ; Fletcher's contributions being especially musical.

During the earlier years of the seventeenth century, the poetry of the time shows the influence of two distinct schools. Just as the dramatists of the day follow the leadership of Shakespeare or Ben Jonson, so do the poets model themselves upon Spenser or Donne. The Spenserian school are allegorical and descriptive ; the school of Donne meditative and lyrical.

The Spenserian School.—The most important names here are those of the brothers Giles and Phineas Fletcher (cousins of John Fletcher, the dramatist), Drummond of Hawthornden, William Browne, and George Wither. Giles Fletcher's long poem, *Christ's Victory and Triumph* (1610), is obviously inspired by the *Faërie Queene*, and has something of its sweetness and richness. Its special significance lies in the fact that it bridges the narrative romance of Spenser and the religious epic of Milton, suggesting at once the

manner of the elder Elizabethan poet and the matter of the last of the great Renascence writers. The pastoral and allegorical note of Spenser is discernible also in Phineas Fletcher's *Purple Island ;* and there is descriptive vigour and beauty in the *Pastorals* (1613) of the Devonshire poet, William Browne. George Wither, the most prolific of this little group, is also the most unequal, but at his best can reproduce effectively the lingering sweetness of Spenser. His well-known " Shall I, wasting in despair ? " is said to have been written while he was imprisoned in the Marshalsea.

The School of Donne.—There were before Donne writers like Davies and Fulke Greville (Lord Brooke), whose temperaments inclined them to philosophical subjects. But Donne is the great personality to develop and emphasize the reflective vein.

John Donne, with his passionate nature and restless vitality, like many of the literary men of his age, was a man of action as well as a man of letters. Erratic and pleasure-loving in his youth, he passed, like St. Francis d'Assisi, from one extreme to another in the course of his life, and in his later years as Dean of St. Paul's proved a preacher of great emotional power, " always preaching to himself," as his biographer Izaak Walton said, " like an angel from a cloud, but in none."

The bulk of his poetry was written in earlier years, and, despite the extravagance and obscurity of much of his work, is finely musical, while its note of wistful meditation inspired many who excelled their master in sweetness and clarity.

Among those who came under his influence may be mentioned the accomplished Lord Herbert of Cherbury, the first to use the metre of *In Memoriam ;* Robert Herrick, most delightful of hedonistic clerics ; Suckling, fertile in dainty conceits ; unhappy Lovelace, famous for his " Loved I not Honour more " ;

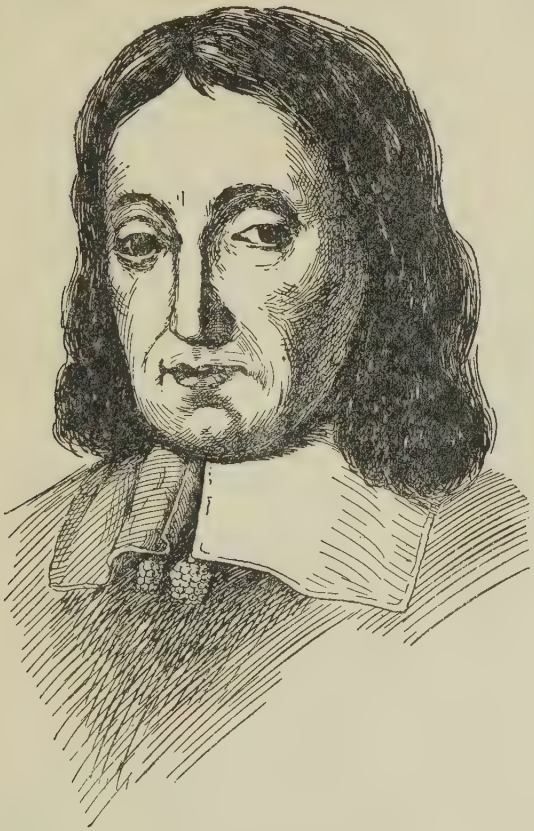
that ardent mystic, Richard Crashaw; brilliant Carew; Henry Vaughan and George Herbert, men of more delicate clay, in whose verse the puritanical quaintness of Donne's poetry is more observable.

Last in this pleasant company of singers is Edmund Waller, admirable as a stylist, but lacking the warmth and unstudied grace of his predecessors, save in one or two short pieces, especially the charming song, " Go, lovely rose."

Drayton.—One poet hard to classify, because of the great variety of his work, is Michael Drayton. Indeed it is for his variety, not for any special excellence, that he is notable. And he had undoubted versatility, giving us a topographical poem, *The Polyolbion*, of genuine interest; some accomplished lyrics, an admirable war song, *The Ballad of Agincourt*, and an ingenious fantasy, *Nymphidia*.

John Milton.—In his literary parentage he owes something both to Donne and Spenser, and in a slight degree to Ben Jonson. But his debts were slight as compared with the rich legacy he gave to English poetry; and it has been justly said that he represented the fourth great influence in English prosody. Chaucer had transformed Middle English into a robust force; and Spenser and Shakespeare gave—the one to narrative, the other to dramatic poetry—a sweetness and variety impossible to overrate. Then there came a period largely of imitation and elaboration, rather than of any great originality. English poetry between the time of Shakespeare and Milton has many gifts and graces, but the quality of greatness is denied it, and it was left for Milton to restore this quality to our poetry. He is the last word in the English Renascence. Gradually but surely its splendour had been fading away, but in Milton it flames up into a glorious sunset, and, like the sunset, touched by a grave and pensive beauty peculiarly its own.

The serious and meditative spirit infused by Puri-



JOHN MILTON

tanism into the poetry of the time turned Milton's thoughts from such subjects as the Arthurian Legend (once considered by him), and his epic genius found perfect expression in the biblical story of the Fall of Man. Nothing is more characteristic of the poet than the arduous mental development he deliberately set before himself in order to grapple with his task. The earlier years of his life were spent in hard study and preparation ; then for a while he plunged into fierce political controversy in the cause of civil and religious liberty ; finally, in the last years of his life he gave us, as the fruit of his mature genius, *Paradise Lost, Paradise Regained,* and *Samson Agonistes.*

Sense of Beauty.—Possessing a sense of beauty as keen though less unrestrained than that possessed by the Elizabethans, Milton's devotion to form and coherence separate him from the great Romantics, and give to the beauty of his verse a delicacy and gravity all their own. Like Jonson, he favoured the classical conventions rather than the happy-go-lucky methods of Romanticism; but, unlike Jonson, he never allowed his scholarship to chill his creative imagination. Nowhere is this quality of beauty better displayed than in the early poems, in *L'Allegro, Il Penseroso, Comus,* and *Lycidas.* They have all the freshness and charm of youth, and exhibit the lighter and more fanciful side of Milton's genius.

As an illustration, take the image in his address to Melancholy :

> " Come, pensive nun, devout and pure."

A Stateliness of Manner.—And with this sense of beauty is combined a stateliness of manner which gives a high dignity to Milton's poetry that has never been surpassed, and rarely equalled in our literature.

The dramatic possibilities of blank verse had been developed to a wonderful degree by Marlowe and

Shakespeare, but in their successors it had to some extent deteriorated. Jonson's classical severity was not combined with any considerable beauty or distinction ; and the increasing looseness of texture in the plays favoured a slovenly tendency in the blank verse of the day. In the lighter form of verse, and in the lyric, there was no such falling off ; but the more ambitious and elaborate forms of non-dramatic poetry stood in need of some influence at once chastening and inspiring. In his great epic, Milton is extraordinarily fertile in the methods he adopts to avoid monotony. He strengthens blank verse without cramping it ; he gives it grace without making it vapid, and rounds off with finished care the single line without ever sacrificing the organic unity of the entire poem. He is like a great organist who, while never losing sight of the ancient melody, adorns it with every conceivable variation which serves to show up, in place of obscuring, the freshness and sweetness of the simple theme.

The decadence of the drama was in itself a sufficient testimony to the disintegrating forces of the day. Austerity was needed by any man of letters who would raise our literature again to a noble level. And none used this quality with more unflinching purpose than Milton. No doubt it made him unpopular. Perhaps no great poet was ever accounted so little by his own generation as Milton. But his greatness was not for long undiscovered.

The modern reader may regard with but languid interest the celestial pageant that Milton unrolls before him in his lengthy epics, but the merits of *Paradise Lost* and *Paradise Regained* do not depend upon the reader's taste in theology, but upon the stark grandeur of many descriptive passages, and the passionate love of Nature which glows throughout the poet's work. It meets us first in the fresh sweetness of *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso :*

" Russet lawns and fallows grey,
Where the nibbling flocks do stray ;
Mountain on whose barren breast
The labouring clouds do often rest ;
Meadows trim with daisies pied,
Shallow brooks and rivers wide "

gains strength and dignity in *Lycidas*—

" While the still morn went out with sandals grey ; "

and thrills us with sublime splendour in *Paradise Lost* and *Samson Agonistes :*

" . . . airs, vernal airs
Breathing the smell of field and grove, attune
The trembling leaves while Universal Pan,
Knit with the Graces and the Hours in dance,
Led on the Eternal Spring."

3. THE NOVEL

The eager inquisitive spirit that flamed up at the Renascence could not exhaust itself entirely in the expansion of our poetry, or even in the creation of the Romantic Drama ; for in achieving this it realized also the compelling interest of everyday actualities.

Had it not been for Italy the Novel might have tarried for another hundred years. Rhetoric and song were indigenous to our race ; Spenser, Marlowe, Shakespeare would have found articulate speech, Italy or no Italy. But it may reasonably be doubted whether we should have had the Elizabethan novelist.

Why was the influence of Italy so suddenly and imperatively felt ?

Largely because of the newly awakened taste of the day for foreign travel, which helped to spread Italian fashions both of dress and literature.

And Italy was the home of the Novel. It was here

Boccaccio in 1350 first attempted those prose tales of amorous adventure, *The Decameron*—"Novella Storia." The term originally meant a *fresh* story, but soon the term novel was applied to *any* story in *prose* as distinct from a story in verse, which retained its old appellation of Romance.

Travel stimulated also the translation of Italian literature, so that those who could not afford to travel could at least learn something of this literary El Dorado through translations.

The Mediæval Romance dealt with a legendary past. The Novel usually dealt with the realities of everyday life. In this lay its compelling attraction.

There was no more popular book than WILLIAM PAINTER'S collection of Italian Stories. He was the Clerk of the Ordnance in the Tower, and his translation not merely inspired the Romantic Drama but interested English readers in Italian fiction specifically, and the art form of the Novel generally.

The Elizabethan prose writers who distinguished themselves in prose fiction were John Lyly, Robert Greene, Thomas Lodge, Sir Philip Sidney, and Thomas Nash.

John Lyly is the pioneer of the English Novel, the first stylist in prose, and the most popular writer of his age. A young Kentish man, with slender financial resources and very few friends, he had the good fortune to attract the attention of Lord Burleigh, who became his patron.

In 1579 Lyly published the first part of his famous fiction, *Euphues, the Anatomy of Wit.*

Euphues is a good-looking, nimble-minded Athenian youth who goes first to Naples, then to England to study men and governments. His volubility is remarkable, and he uses his friend Philautus as a kind of conversational Aunt Sally against whom to hurl his sententious wisdom. Once indeed during the voyage to England Philautus does rebel: "In faith, Euphues,

thou hast told a long tale, the beginning I have forgotten, the middle I understand not, and the end hangeth not together . . . In the meantime it were best for me to take a nap, for I cannot brook these seas, which provoke my stomach sore."

The story itself is slight, with a mild love interest, the chief value of the book lying in its picture of English customs and its peculiarities of style.

The style is marked by the constant use of antithesis and alliteration, which at times becomes mannered to a wearisome extent, but often gives agreeable force and pungency to the matter :

> " . . . Where salt doth grow nothing else can breed.
> Where friendship is built no offence can harbour."

Often, too, there is humour :

> " It is a blind goose that cometh to the fox's sermon."
> " Thou must halt cunningly to beguile a cripple."

And yet Lyly's prose is prose which has not yet shaken off the ornaments of verse. It is the prose of an age that could find its speech far more readily in song and sonnet.

Robert Greene, who succeeded Lyly, if less brilliant, attains a greater simplicity in his later writings.

He was a happy-go-lucky Bohemian, who had no patron, and lived on his wits. His first novel is poor and imitative, but in *Pandosto* (1588), from which Shakespeare took his *Winter's Tale*, he showed real originality. The most considerable contribution by Greene to the development of the novel is to be found in his pamphlets rather than in his conventional fiction, for here he writes from personal knowledge of the " underworld " of his day. Especially vivid is his *Life and Death of Ned Browne*, a notorious cut-purse, wherein he anticipates the " low life " scenes of Defoe and Smollett.

Another writer of fiction to be noted is Thomas Lodge, the studious friend of Greene. He travelled much in the earlier years of his life, and while journeying he wrote several romances—one entitled *Rosalynde* (1590), which inspired Shakespeare's *As You Like It.*

The fourth important name in the fiction of the time is Thomas Nash. "Ingenuous, ingenious, fluent, facetious Thomas Nash," as his friend Lodge called him. The emphatic quality was the facetiousness. There was a strain of humour in Lyly, and fitful outbursts of gaiety in Greene, but both Lodge and Sidney showed rather a contemplative wit than humour or mirthfulness. It is otherwise with Nash; he has a rich fund of humour that partakes somewhat of Rabelais's uproarious quality.

Nash, like Greene, took the rogue in hand and painted with skill and fidelity the needy adventurer of the time: *The Unfortunate Traveller, or The Life of Jack Wilton* (1594), but unlike his contemporary he did so with a smile on his lips. He found the English novel suffering from too much sentiment, and promptly freshened it with his light-hearted humour.

He died at the age of thirty-three, having shortened his days, says his friend Dekker, "by keeping company with pickled herrings."

Eschewing the literary affectations and manners of his day, he did his best to cultivate an individual style, vigorous, easy, and vital, one well suited to his subject-matter. He is the precursor of Fielding; Lyly the progenitor of Richardson.

Sidney's Arcadia.—Of Sidney's work as a poet mention has been made. His *Arcadia* remains to be noticed, for it marks a well-defined stage in the history of the novel.

Preceding writers had been more or less disciples of Lyly and imitators of Euphuism. Sidney invented a new style. And for a while Arcadianism displaced Euphuism. This book, written in 1580,

appeared after Sidney's death. It was written primarily to please his sister, the Countess of Pembroke. In essence it is a romance with a pastoral flavouring. There is more characterization and more movement, though less humour, than we find in Lyly; more passion than in Greene, if less actuality; and a finer vein of poetry than in Lodge, though more unequal in interest. The style, despite artificialities, rises at times to a level of high beauty. With Lyly's *Euphues* it may take its place as one of the dominant influences of the time.

French influences more considerably affect Sidney than his predecessors. Perhaps he is, of all of them, the least touched by the magic of Italy, though he was a great admirer of Spanish literature.

Dekker, whose dramatic work has already been noticed, also attempted fiction. But although he had some measure of Nash's gaiety and shrewdness of observation in the "Picaresque" stories which he essayed, it is as a dramatist and writer of prose other than fiction that he is most entitled to remembrance. With the close of the Elizabethan period the first period of the English novel came to an end. During the next century, French romance of the extravagant and artificial order came into fashion for the class who cared about fiction. But, as we shall see, if the seventeenth century produced no great novelist, it produced many writers who contributed indirectly to the amazing development of the Novel which took place in the eighteenth century.

4. PROSE OTHER THAN FICTION

In the prose of the age Roger Ascham, that sturdy Puritan scholar, provides a suitable starting-point.

He effectually broke away from the elder traditions that gave Latin preference to English, and favoured good, direct English prose. His distaste for romance

and the influence of modern Italy kept his prose somewhat cramped and colourless. But there are two of his treatises extant, one on *Shooting*, the other on *School-mastering*, which, if lacking in flexibility of style, none the less exhibit him as a writer of direct, orderly English.

Ascham gave English prose clarity ; Lyly imported colour and animation into it ; and Sidney, both in his *Arcadia* and in his admirable *Apologie for Poetrie* (1581), gave it sweetness.

Here is an extract from the description of the Vale of Arcadia :

" . . . Here a shepherd's boy piping as though he should never be old ; there a young shepherdess knitting, and withal singing, and it seemed that her voice comforted her hands to work, and her hands kept time to her voice music."

Richard Hooker, the famous preacher and controversialist, added to these qualities that of dignity. Self-restrained in his dialectic, he is equally self-restrained in his style. Less fantastic than Lyly, less exuberant than Sidney, there is a power and a balance about his writing that none of his predecessors could achieve.

Francis Bacon.—This is the most considerable name at the close of the Elizabethan age. His cool, judicious temperament failed to attract the Queen, and this enabled his uncle Burleigh, and cousin Robert Cecil, to keep him from opportunities of rising ; but on her death he rapidly made his way, for James took considerable interest in him, and it was during the later part of his life that the bulk of his literary work was done. Although he had no great respect for the English language, holding that " these modern languages will at one time play the bankrupt with books," yet no man individually did more than he to give strength and simplicity to our tongue. So

far, the great defect in English prose was its prolixity and diffuseness. Bacon put an end to this, and his Essays are, even to this day, a model of terse, easy English. With his philosophical and scientific treatises, such as the *Novum Organum*, we need not concern ourselves here. From our point of view the chief writings to notice are the *Essays*, the *Advancement of Learning*, the *History of Henry VII.*, and the *New Atlantis*.

The keynote of the *New Atlantis* is the pursuit of knowledge, which in Bacon's view is a religious duty. The College of Research, which he pictures in his fragmentary sketch, anticipates the Royal Society, which sprang into being later, and served as a model (admitted by Diderot) for the French Encyclopædia of the eighteenth century. Many of the scientific hints thrown out by Bacon as Utopian possibilities have now become everyday realities. Certainly we may claim to have "some Degrees of Flying in the Ayre . . . ships and Boates for going under water." Modern medical science is familiar with "Chambers of Health where we qualify the Aire . . . for the cure of divers Diseases." These are but a few illustrations of the way in which Bacon foreshadowed the trend of scientific research.

The style of the book is clear and direct. Comparing it as a Utopian picture with that of More, a few points of interest detach themselves.

(1) More emphasizes the social, Bacon the intellectual well-being of the community.

(2) The chief note in More's *Utopia* is simplicity of life, whereas the chief characteristic of the citizens of *Atlantis* is orderliness of life.

(3) More is puritan in his ideas of dress; Bacon favours a certain external splendour.

(4) The tone of More's mind is democratic; of Bacon's aristocratic.

Bacon's fragment, equally with More's more con-

siderable work, has inspired future generations no less by its fertile suggestions than by its simple charm of narrative.

Excellent in another way is the sketch of *Henry VII.*, a lucid, vigorous piece of historical narrative, with touches of vivid characterization.

Turning to the *Essays*, we note the intimate ease of the style. If Montaigne is the first great Essayist, Bacon is certainly the first great English Essayist. He saw clearly that the art of the Essay is in reality the art of Conversation ; that the main thing was to get into familiar touch with the reader, and this could only be done by avoiding misty rhetoric and formal mannerisms, and stating the subject simply, clearly, and tersely. No other Essayist, with the exception of Emerson, has shown so condensed and aphoristic a style. And like Emerson, he throws off a succession of pithy epigrammatic sayings. " No man," said Ben Jonson, " ever spake more neatly, more precisely, more weightily, or suffered less emptiness, less idleness in what he uttered . . ."

Along with Bacon may be mentioned Jonson, whose *Discoveries* are written in a style that for terseness and lucidity is little inferior to Bacon's.

Influence of the Bible.—*The Authorized Version of the Bible*, which appeared early in the seventeenth century, was to mould and colour the literature of the succeeding centuries. The translators took the fullest advantage of the literary beauty of their matter, assisted by the excellent rough material provided for them by earlier English versions.

Indirectly, of course, since Saxon times, Hebrew song had glorified English prose ; and in Cædmon's *Hymn*, where English literature found its earliest expression, we have the rhythm and parallelism peculiar to Hebrew poetry. Moreover, Hebraic idioms occur continually in the prose of Aelfred and Aelfric, Wyclif and Langland.

But the effect of the Authorized Version was to intensify enormously the influence of the Bible on the prose of the time.

The greatness of English prose dates from the translation of the Bible, and although English poetry is far less dependent for its excellence upon Hebrew inspiration, even from this source it received weight, dignity, and richness.

During the Caroline times the influence of the Authorized Version may clearly be traced in English prose. It gives dignity to such historians as Clarendon and Fuller, a sober eloquence to the devotional outpourings of Jeremy Taylor, and an ease and grace to the quaint fancies of Sir Thomas Browne's *Religio Medici* (1642) and *Urn Burial* (1658), and the discursive wit of the *Anatomy of Melancholy* (1621), by Robert Burton.

Milton's prose, in his earlier days, has more of the rough vigour and directness of Elizabethan polemics than the strength and beauty of its greater prose. But two of his pamphlets rise to a higher level: *The Areopagitica, or Speech for the Liberty of Unlicensed Printing* (1644), and the tract on *Education* (1644).

John Bunyan.—If Milton is the last word in the poetry of the English Renascence, Bunyan is the last word in prose. In both Puritanism finds eloquent speech. We can imagine neither of them well without the Authorized Version—least of all Bunyan. Milton's style is also steeped in classicism; but Bunyan, simple and unlettered, derives directly from the Bible. There is an epic quality about *The Pilgrim's Progress* (1677) which has the rare merit of touching the imagination of both the scholar and the uncultured man. Had he been born a hundred years earlier, we might have had another and finer Nash. Undoubtedly he had the instinct of the novelist, for his characterization is clear and strong, his dialogue alive, and his descriptive power vigorous and picturesque. Then

JOHN BUNYAN

From a pen-drawing by
E. Heber Thompson.

there is such unpremeditated art and sincerity in the writing. Sincerity and vigour inform also *The Holy War* (1684) and *Grace Abounding* (1666), but there is here less attempt at literary form. Mention must be made of that remarkable fiction, *The Life and Death of Mr. Badman* (1680), which, despite its comparative brevity, challenges equality with *The Pilgrim's Progress*. The English Novel in the eighteenth century owed a heavy debt to John Bunyan.

CHAPTER III

The Age of Satire (*c.* 1660–1740)
(*From Butler to Pope*)

Introduction.—About the middle of the seventeenth century a change began to come over the spirit of English literature. This change was due to no mere fluctuation of literary fashion, but was deeply rooted in the life of the time. The age of the Renascence was an age of spiritual and material expansion. Englishmen realized for the first time their solidarity as a nation; and released suddenly from Continental struggles, especially from the dread of Spanish supremacy, they found an outlet for their excited emotions in drama and song. Loyalty to Elizabeth became a flaming passion; pride and delight in their country's past a religious faith. This spirit is reflected in the *Faërie Queene*, and in the historical plays of Marlowe and Shakespeare.

But the emotional fervour was too high-pitched to last. Already in the early years of the seventeenth century its splendid exuberance had degenerated into extravagance and violence. The lofty idealism that had steadied the venturesome bark of Elizabethan poesy was growing attenuated, and the great minds in the closing years of the age, like Bacon and Milton, reflect in their writings the dawn of fresh interests. The purification of civic and political life emerges more and more into the forefront. Shakespeare and Ben Jonson stand aloof from the political problems of

the hour. Bacon and Milton are active politicians no less than great writers. But until the Restoration, the full significance of this change is not realized. It meets us first of all in the later poems of Abraham Cowley, and in the polished verse of Edmund Waller and Sir John Denham ; it frankly and unmistakably proclaims itself a new note in our literature with the coming of Dryden.

What is the chief Characteristic of this Change ?—*The Dominance of the Critical Spirit in place of the Imaginative Spirit.* Such a change is inevitable when literature is made the vehicle of attacking the political life of the day. The creative imagination moves on the plane of primal human qualities : it is concerned with the interpretation of human nature, and although passing movements may give a local habitation and a name to some of its dioramic pictures, the main object is not to criticize the life of the day but to interpret it.

The new spirit, however, is above all critical and analytic—not creative and synthetic ; it brings the intellect rather than the poetic imagination into play. And the merits of the new school are to be found in its intellectual force and actuality ; just as its demerits lie in its lack of deep imagination, and tendency to deal with manners and superficialities, rather than with elemental things and the larger issues of life.

Reasons for the Change.—This change is due partly to the conditions of English political and social life, partly to the influence of France, which early in the seventeenth century threw off the flowery traditions of the Italian Renascence, and declared itself in favour of literary sobriety and restraint. The French poet Malherbe, early in the seventeenth century, had pioneered the movement, and in 1673 Boïleau counselled his countrymen to write with " good sense " and avoid Italian rhapsody.

So it will be seen that the new age follows in the

JOHN DRYDEN

wake of Jonson, not of Shakespeare. Such a change was better adapted for a kind of literature which aimed especially at clearness, conciseness, and concentrated force. The less attractive aspect of this ideal is seen in the verse of the day; the finer and more valuable aspects in its prose.

The object of the leading writers of the time was to avoid extravagance and emotionalism. This in many cases they did so successfully as to suppress altogether the emotional and basic qualities of great poetry, though their method found congenial expression in the satire.

Poetry, starved of emotional sustenance, had to fall back on epigram, but the "good sense" ideal was an admirable one for prose. For if we examine the aims of the prose writers of the day, we shall find that their supreme object is to be simple in style and natural in manner.

"The Royal Society," declared the Bishop of Rochester, "have exacted from all their members a close, marked, natural way of speaking; positive expressions, clear sense, a native easiness, bringing all things as near the mathematical plainness as they can; and preferring the language of artisans, countrymen, and merchants before that of wits and scholars."

This is unequivocal enough, and as we shall see, when we consider the prose of the age, the ideal here enunciated was triumphantly put into practice. In the drama alone, which had come to be a courtiers' game, is artificiality of prose upheld. There, for the sake of amusement, lucidity and directness are made subsidiary to the brilliance of wit and stylic graces.

I. POETRY

One result of the characteristic touched upon above is that the poetry of this new age is marked by the substitution of humour for passion.

Humour played a subsidiary part in Renascence literature ; now it is the prime factor, and the literary form in which it is expressed is called the *satire*.

The note of satire is discernible in some of the Caroline singers, but the two names of greatest importance are the puritan, Andrew Marvel, and anti-puritan, Samuel Butler. Butler can be effective enough at times, as in the picture of Sir Hudibras's Presbyterian followers, who

> " Call fire and sword and desolation,
> A godly thorough Reformation ;
> Compound for sins they are inclined to,
> By damning those they have no mind to."

The first English verse satire had been Gascoigne's *Steele Glas* (1576), but it stands by itself, and there was no other satirical verse until the time of Donne.

JOHN DRYDEN is the first exponent of the movement. With great intellectual power and a remarkable aptitude for expressing himself clearly and succinctly in vigorous verse, he gave us his great poem, *Absalom and Achitophel* (1681), after a long apprenticeship of playwriting. This satire, political in trend, attacked the politicians of the day—Shaftesbury was Achitophel, Monmouth was Absalom—with a mordant wit that compelled attention. A later poetical work was his *Fables, Ancient and Modern* (1700), which show an easy mastery of verse and an acumen unsurpassed by any of his contemporaries.

The distinctive qualities of Dryden as a poet are ease, variety of method, and vigour.

In the heroic couplet, the decasyllabic quatrain, and in blank verse he showed equal mastery. But it was in the heroic couplet that he achieved his strongest effects. It lacks the chiselled nicety of form and epigrammatic brilliance brought to it by his successor Pope, but has a richer and more vital body about it ;

and as a master of prosody, Dryden ranks with Milton and Shakespeare.

Dryden, like Jonson, was the literary dictator of his age; presiding at Wills's Coffee House in undisputed supremacy among the wits of his time.

His successor, ALEXANDER POPE, was a man of more feminine temperament, though equally imbued with the same critical spirit. But whereas in Dryden's case we get broad massive effects, as a rule, in Pope we have delicate filigree work. Unlike Dryden—unlike most other poets indeed, Pope seems to have served no apprenticeship to literature. His first poem, *An Essay in Criticism* (1711), is as careful in phrasing, as equally polished, and as admirable in craftsmanship as the mature *Essay on Man* (1732–34).

As a satirist, his range is less wide than Dryden's, and he cannot achieve the sinewy ease of "glorious John." But along his own lines, admittedly restricted, his wit is even keener, and for sheer lightness of touch and mordant delicacy his "boudoir" satire, *The Rape of the Lock* (1712), is perfect. The artificial tone of the age, the frivolous aspect of femininity is nowhere more exquisitely pictured than in this poem. It is the epic of triflings; a page torn from the petty, pleasure-seeking life of a fashionable beauty; the *mise-en-scène* the toilet chamber and the card table; in short, the veritable apotheosis in literary guise of scent, patches, and powder.

Pope's success as a writer naturally made for him a number of enemies, many of whom, obscure and penniless men, it would have been best to treat with good-natured silence. They were too feeble to injure Pope's reputation, and to attack them scurrilously, as he did in the *Dunciad* (1728), showed an unpleasing smallness of nature. As the rough but essentially good-natured Johnson said, "Whom did it concern to know that one scribbler or another was a Dunce!"

The work of Pope is rich in aphorisms and apo-

ALEXANDER POPE

thegms. There is no poet, Shakespeare excepted, whose sayings have so freely enriched our language; and it is not through any greatness of imagination or freshness of insight, but by virtue of a singular power to transform an ordinary idea, a commonplace morality, into a neat and pungent phrase.

For instance:

"Worth makes the man, and want of it the fellow,
The rest is all but leather or prunella."
(*Essay on Man.*)

"A little learning is a dangerous thing—
Drink deep, or taste not the Pierian spring."
(*Essay on Criticism.*)

During the later period of Pope's life a reaction started in English poetry, which is best considered when dealing with the Romantic movement of the nineteenth century; but during the greater part of Pope's life his lesser contemporaries follow the general lines initiated by Dryden. Addison's verse is marked by culture and grace, whilst a blither note is struck by John Gay in his *Shepherd's Week*. Gay, most companionable of *bons viveurs*, has given us some agreeable sketches of London manners and fashions, and his light-hearted gift of song finds expression in *Black-Eyed Susan* and *The Beggar's Opera*. Gay belonged to Pope's circle; another associate is "Matt" Prior, a gay trifler, who had the gift of expressing his easy cynicism in excellent verse. He more nearly approaches Pope than any other contemporary in the technical excellence of his work and in epigrammatic power.

2. THE DRAMA

William Congreve, one of the most brilliant dramatists of the age, told Voltaire on one occasion

that he wished to be regarded not as a literary man, but as a gentleman.

This pious opinion is indicative of the tone of the time. The drama was no longer, as it was in Elizabethan days, an expression of the national life ; but a picture of " polite society." In Shakespeare's day it had been a national recreation, now it was merely a fashionable pastime.

The influence of France is more pronounced in the drama than in either the poetry or prose. French Romances were ransacked for plots, and the methods and situations of Corneille, Racine, and especially Molière, may be traced in much of the dramatic literature of the time. As might be expected, the age excelled in comedy rather than in tragedy ; the most remarkable of the tragedies being by THOMAS OTWAY, *The Orphan* (1680), and *Venice Preserved* (1682). These are rich in emotional situations, but are not in any way comparable with the tragedies of the Elizabethans.

Dryden, whose figure dominates here, as in the realm of verse and of prose, experimented in both comedy and tragedy. His tragedies, the *Indian Queen* (1664) and the *Indian Emperor* (published 1667), popularized for fourteen years the rhymed couplet in drama. This was an innovation from the French, and for a while put out of favour the old blank verse. In 1678, however, he returned to blank verse in his best tragedy, *All for Love.* In addition to these plays he is responsible for some excellent comedies ; for instance *The Spanish Friar* (1681) and *Amphitryon.*

The comedy, however, developed further in the hands of Sir George Etheredge, Mrs. Behn, and Shadwell ; and was brought to its highest pitch by Wycherley, Congreve, Vanbrugh, and Farquhar.

WYCHERLEY, for all his skill in intrigue, as illustrated in *Love in a Wood* (1672) and *The Country Wife* (1675), is inferior both in invention and wit to Congreve. Of Congreve's plays, the best are *Love for*

Love (1693) and *The Way of the World* (1700); excellent alike in their acting qualities and their literary power. Inferior in style though more agreeable in quality are *The Relapse* (1697) and *The Confederacy* (1705) of VANBRUGH, an architect of Flemish descent; and *The Recruiting Officer* (1706) and *Beaux' Stratagem* (1707) of FARQUHAR, the first of the many brilliant Irishmen who have enriched our stage.

Satiric comedy was followed during Queen Anne's time by a period of sentimental comedy, pioneered by Steele. Another type of comedy was started in Gay's *Beggar's Opera* (1727), and during the later years of the eighteenth century sentiment and satire blended in the fresher and sweeter work of GOLDSMITH'S *Good-Natured Man* (1768) and *She Stoops to Conquer* (1773), while the witty *métier* of Congreve found a revivalist in Sheridan, who had much of Congreve's inventive power and Vanbrugh's polish, with none of their coarseness. With SHERIDAN'S *The Rivals* and *The School for Scandal* the age of the elder comedy of manners practically closes. His is the last great name in eighteenth-century drama.

3. PROSE

Whenever intellectual rather than sheerly imaginative qualities dominate the literature of a period, the prose invariably proves of more commanding importance than the poetry. The logical faculty and the gift of critical insight find freer and more suitable expression in language unfettered by rhyme or metre. Such is the case here. The poetry is interesting of its kind, but its kind is extremely limited; the drama, half-way house between prose and verse, excels in comedy spirit, but on the more serious side cannot compare in any way with the rich intensity of Elizabethan tragedy: that is to say, it excels where intellect, not high imagination, is called for.

The prose, however, while in certain directions it feels necessarily the lowering of the poetic temperature, is on the whole on a higher and firmer plane than it has ever been before. Elizabethan prose vacillated between the ultra-ornate and the ultra-bald; occasionally in a Hooker or Bacon it achieved an austere grace or a stately brevity, but its tendency is in the direction of verbosity and elaborate ornamentation, and this limits its effectiveness in a somewhat arbitrary manner. So while its merits and charm are often undeniable, it lacks that directness, simplicity, and ease which are the distinguishing marks of prose in the age of Dryden and Pope.

Traces of this new school may be found in the later prose of Cowley, the sober, historical method of Clarendon in his *History of the Great Rebellion* (1707), and the *Leviathan* (1651) of Hobbes, which discovered the new divine right of the people, as opposed to the old theory of the divine right of kings. Dryden, however, is the first great exponent and pioneer. His interest in dramatic literature led him to write, about 1685, his excellent *Essay on Dramatic Poesy*, which, besides containing fine and discriminating criticism of the English drama, is an admirable example of plain, direct, and vital prose; this, without becoming vulgar or slipshod, achieves an easy and intimate note especially telling, and can on occasion reach dignity and eloquence without recourse to windy rhetoric.

In the sermons of John Tillotson, this plain sobriety of language receives further illustration. One has only to compare the matter-of-fact style of Tillotson, for instance his St. Paul's sermon on the *Wisdom of being Religious*, with the ornate brilliance of Jeremy Taylor to appreciate the effect of the new spirit.

Two names of greater literary importance are those of Sir William Temple and the Marquis of Halifax (George Savile). Their work marks the beginnings of the modern Essay. Temple, husband of that most

delightful letter-writer, Dorothy Osborne, best displays his literary gifts in his *Miscellanies*. These essays on various subjects—Health, Gout, Gardening, Poetry—are written in clear, agreeable, unaffected style, rising at times to a rhythmic beauty, as in the *Essay on Poetry*. They certainly show that the ease and intimacy of the New School need not be divorced from dignity and beauty. Halifax was a political force as well as a man of letters ; achieved fame with his pamphlet, *The Character of a Trimmer*, which indicates accurately his own political attitude ; became famous as a parliamentary speaker ; and in a volume of *Miscellanies* (*c.* 1688), which contained essays on various subjects and a few notable pamphlets, showed grace, lucidity, and terseness. He writes more like the man of the world than Temple, and his aphorisms have a pleasant satirical flavour, as that on *An Empty Woman :* " Such an one is seldom serious but with her tailor ; " or this, " You may love your children without living in the nursery."

A remarkable development in prose writing is signalized by the incursion of the diarist into literature. Samuel Pepys (1633–1703)—inquisitive, vain, childish, delightful—is *facile princeps*, although his famous *Diary* was not published until early in the nineteenth century. Of less significance is the *Diary* of his elder and more staid contemporary Evelyn, and the quaintly colloquial *Lives* of Roger North.

If the ease and simplicity of the new school of writers may be seen in Dryden and Pepys, its clarity in Temple, its worldly common-sense in Halifax, its matter-of-factness is nowhere better shown than in the work of the philosopher John Locke.

Just as the trend of his work signifies the apotheosis of practical common-sense, so does his style reflect the spirit of common-sense. It is clear, thoughtful, to the point, devoid of all flowers of speech, never aspiring to eloquence, eschewing humour, pathos, and the

JOSEPH ADDISON

From a pen-drawing by
E. Heber Thompson

graces dear to the essayist; yet preserved from dullness and triteness by the dignity of his subject and by the intellectual force of the writer.

Joseph Addison and Sir Richard Steele.—"Whoever wishes," says Dr. Johnson, "to attain an English style, familiar but not coarse, and elegant but not ostentatious, must give his days and nights to the volumes of Addison." Posterity has endorsed the essential justice of Johnson's tribute. The more urbane aspects of eighteenth-century prose are nowhere better exhibited than in the prose of Addison. Steele's writing shows greater warmth and vigour, but for delicate charm Addison excels.

In 1709 Steele started *The Tatler*, which inaugurated a fresh epoch in the development of prose.

We are now approaching the existence in London of a definite literary class. The man of letters in the ages preceding depended for his livelihood upon a patron.

Patronage still exists, and Pope made his fortune by what has been called "a kind of joint-stock patronage," where the aristocratic patron found it convenient to induce his friends to subscribe towards the maintenance of the poet. But the older system is dying out.

At first the poet or the pamphleteer attaches himself to some influential Minister, using his pen on behalf of this gentleman's cause. Afterwards, when the Minister found he could get his work done more cheaply than by hiring men of taste, the literary man gets thrown upon the suffrages of a reading public then rising into existence.

The coffee-house, and later the clubs, were centres around which radiated the thoughtful and intelligent; politicians, lawyers, clergymen, literary men, met at these places and discussed the problems of the hour. Thus the author and his public were forced into intimate proximity. If you admired a man's writings you hastened to his coffee-house, where you might hear him

holding forth to his own special friends. Perhaps you brought with you a companion. And thus the circle of discipleship grew.

What the tavern had been to the sixteenth century, the coffee-house was to the seventeenth and eighteenth. It reached the height of its popularity in the eighteenth century, and before its close had passed into practical oblivion.

The well-known writers of the day congregated at these places and talked to their friends—not infrequently *at* them. It was at a coffee-house that Pope found Dryden; and here it was that Addison discoursed to a select circle, and Johnson delivered many of his sententious periods.

The Rise of Journalism.—The earliest newspapers were voluminous concerns. The first circulating in London was the *Mercurius Gallobelgicus*, a bound book of 625 pages, written in Latin and printed at Cologne. It was concerned with the story of the German Wars. Gradually the identification of a particular paper with a definite political or social philosophy was possible, and in 1695 the Censorship of the Press was abolished and the publication of a modern newspaper became practicable.

The Tatler started by detailing news mingled with essays and stories and dramatic criticism. It was through the influence of Addison that the essay became the most important constituent.

January 2, 1711, saw the death of *The Tatler*, and the following March 1, the birth of *The Spectator*. It ran for 555 numbers, continuing until December 6, 1712. The essay, which had proved so great a success in *The Tatler*, became the one ingredient of *The Spectator*. The sobriety and moderation displayed by the writers, the humour, the genial moralizing, these qualities made for the stupendous success of the journal.

The *Essays* of Addison mirror the life of the time in

much the same way as did Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*. We come across the needy versifier, Ned Softly, frequenting the coffee-house to find an audience for his verses; the happy-go-lucky vagrant Will Wimble; Will Honeycomb, the elderly Tom Rake, and most vital and lovable of all, the genial country squire, Sir Roger de Coverley. In fact, here in its pictures of the Town are all the materials of the modern Novel of social life.

Daniel Defoe.—To many people Defoe is chiefly known as the author of *Robinson Crusoe* (1719), and a few other tales dealing with low life. And yet, fiction was merely an incident in Defoe's astoundingly varied career. He was fifty-eight when he wrote *Robinson Crusoe*, and before that time he had been in turn a merchant, a manufacturer, a satirist, a public official, and an editor.

In 1706 appeared *The True Relation of the Apparition of one Mrs. Veal*, and here he gave proof of his power to create that illusion of reality which is the mainspring of successful fiction, and which he employed with finer results later on in *Robinson Crusoe* (1719) and subsequent experiments in fiction—that vivacious portrait of a pirate, *Captain Singleton* (1720), *Moll Flanders* (1721), *Colonel Jack* (1722), and *Roxana* (1724), dealing with the shadier side of London life; and the admirably realistic make-believe *Journal of the Plague Year* (1722).

His work is characterized by an intensely concrete imagination, and a remarkable aptitude for manipulating detail. What makes *Robinson Crusoe* so remarkable a book is the fine touch of precision which he imparts to the story by his clear, matter-of-fact manner.

Why do boys take *Robinson Crusoe* so warmly to their hearts? Because he gives exactly those matters which the boy is curious about—*i.e.* how many biscuits he ate, how he built the raft, what the parrot talked about. Nor are the details overdone. Defoe

could make an inventory as appetizing as Scott could an adventure. His power of giving dramatic value to detail is well seen in the *Journal of the Plague Year* —*e.g.* where the piper is carried off in the dead-cart.

Underlying the fiction and pamphlets alike there is a clear, satirical purpose—to expose the pretences and social ills of the day. In his pictures of low life he draws attention to the terrible effect of bad environment, and in such a pamphlet as *Poor Man's Plea* (*c.* 1698), he attacked, with a vigour which Mr. Blatchford could not have bettered, the injustice of the laws against immorality, and the distinction made between the treatment of rich and poor.

As a writer he helped to kill the high-falutin romance, so long a favourite; and while his lack of imaginative depth and tenderness give pronounced limitations to his work, and his didacticism is often oppressive, yet with obvious failings he combines considerable and often underrated merits. He was fair-minded and good-hearted, no small matter in those days; a good fighter, who fought honestly in the open; and if his ideals were not very inspiring, he never pretended they were: a sincere, just, kindly, unaffected man.

JONATHAN SWIFT was a keen and passionate political partisan, who wrote first for the Whigs, afterwards for the Tories. In an age of famous and brilliant pamphleteers he is second to none. But he is even more than this; he is one of the greatest satirists in English literature. Political and social life are thrown into the crucible of his wrath, and there emerges—the mocking allegory, *Gulliver's Travels*.

His first prose piece, *The Dissensions of Athens and Rome* (1701) (with due application to current politics), has no special merits. In the *Battle of the Books* (1704) he is clear, brilliant, and apposite; and in *The Tale of a Tub* [1] (1704) his satirical power is at its height.

[1] In olden times a discursive story was called the "Tale of a Tub."

Gulliver's Travels (1726) is richer in content and wider in its appeal, and in *Drapier's Letters* (1724), dealing with the coinage; the *Polite Conversation* (1738) concerning the ways of "good" society; and *Directions to Servants*, a side picture on the manners of the age, we have admirable illustrations of his pungent wit and stinging irony.

What is the special quality of Swift's satire, and how does it differ from his contemporaries?

In certain respects Swift resembles Defoe. There is direct vigour and matter-of-factness about his satire, and like Defoe, he uses irony to drive home a point. Less wide in his range than Defoe, and more savage in his methods, he sounds profounder depths, and exhibits a more cosmic humour than his contemporary. The humour is often as bitter as gall, but its power and appositeness are beyond question. Tragedy is written across Swift's life. His intellectual audacity stood in his own pathway. There could be no preferment for the Churchman who so mercilessly ridiculed theology in *The Tale of a Tub;* no happiness for a lover so capricious and incalculable as he; no content for a man who, in an age when the emotional life was kept so sternly subjected, looked out upon life with such fierce and passionate intensity of feeling. He is like a man born out of due time; and though he stands alone among the men of his age, unable to endure the easy cynicism of men like Gay, who held life to be a jest, or to follow the genial humanity of Steele and the graceful urbanities of Addison, yet he is not great enough to rise above them. On the critical side he is supremely great; none could despise the world and mankind with such brilliant fury. But he had no alternative; nothing to put in the place of material ambition. He is at heart as worldly as Defoe; and it is part of his tragedy that he recognizes the fact.

Among lesser names of the time, as makers of prose, are Dr. John Arbuthnot, the great-hearted

friend of Swift, of whom Swift said, " If the world had but a dozen Arbuthnots in it, I would burn my travels." He was a noted physician, a ripe scholar, a wit who could hold his own with the best of his contemporaries. As a writer he lacked the integrity and originality of the great prose men ; followed frankly the literary methods of Swift, avoiding the bitterness, and did much to popularize his master by drawing attention to his genius. Bolingbroke, a brilliant political and social figure in his own age, has little literary significance to-day. He had a nimble wit and a facile pen, but was fundamentally insincere, and his flashy talent was not considerable enough to impart vitality to his writing. Sharply contrasting with him is the figure of the Irishman, GEORGE BERKELEY, a man of subtle intellect and noble character. His chief works are *Theory of Vision* (1709), *The Principles of Human Knowledge* (1710), and Dialogues between *Hylas and Philonous* (1713) (in which the materialist and idealist standpoint are discussed), *Alciphron, or the Minute Philosopher* (1732), in which his metaphysics is stated with rare dialectical skill, and in a singularly lucid and graceful style. According to Pope, Berkeley had been vouchsafed " every virtue under heaven " ; and although his theory that matter is illusory, and that what we see and handle is merely symbolic of spiritual realities, met with a good deal of ridicule from the " common-sense " school of the day, yet no man was better praised or in greater favour than he. Few thinkers indeed have had such command of literary expression. In his moral ideas he curiously foreshadows much of the modern school of economics—*e.g.* " Whether the four elements and man's labour therein be not the true source of wealth." " Whether pictures and statues are not in fact so much treasure."

If Berkeley anticipates the modern school of economists, so did Mandeville in his *Fable of the Bees* (1714)

anticipate the criticism of political society, which started with Godwin and continued in the hands of Samuel Butler and Bernard Shaw.

The Fable of the Bees is partly in verse, partly in prose, and has as its thesis the innate corruptness of modern civilization.

CHAPTER IV

The Age of Sense and Sensibility (*c.* 1740–80)

Johnson and the Eighteenth Century Novelists

I. DR. JOHNSON AND HIS CIRCLE

Characteristics of the later Eighteenth Century.—There is a real difference between the psychological atmosphere of Dryden's day and that of Johnson's. Differences of this kind are not to be sharply defined by chronological means, for the satirical brilliance that came into vogue with the Restoration lasted on until the publication of the *Dunciad* (1728). Meanwhile, however, during the later years of Pope, a more sober habit of mind began to prevail, and sensibility, so long ruled out of literature, broke the literary barriers with a vengeance.

Four years before the death of Pope, a generation that had acclaimed his polished unemotional verse, went mad over the riotous sentimentality of Richardson's *Pamela* (1740).

Good Sense plus greater Sensibility—e.g. Pope and Johnson.—Good sense is as characteristic of Dryden as of Johnson. Yet we are conscious of some change. What is it? It is the advent of sensibility—an emotional sensitiveness, that soon found expression in literature, and gradually merged into the larger and deeper imaginative life of the Romantic Revival.

SAMUEL JOHNSON

From a pen-drawing by E. Heber Thompson after the Reynolds portrait

One of the commonplaces of literary criticism is an insistence on the matter-of-fact, unemotional character of the eighteenth century, for three-quarters at any rate of its span. The generalization has this element of truth in it, that nearly all the verse, and much of the drama, is, as we have seen, intellectual rather than emotional, critical rather than imaginative, satirical rather than passionate. But it was, after all, only a literary convention which held the field for a while.

The English people were no less emotional or sentimental in Pope's day than they were in Shelley's or in Shakespeare's.

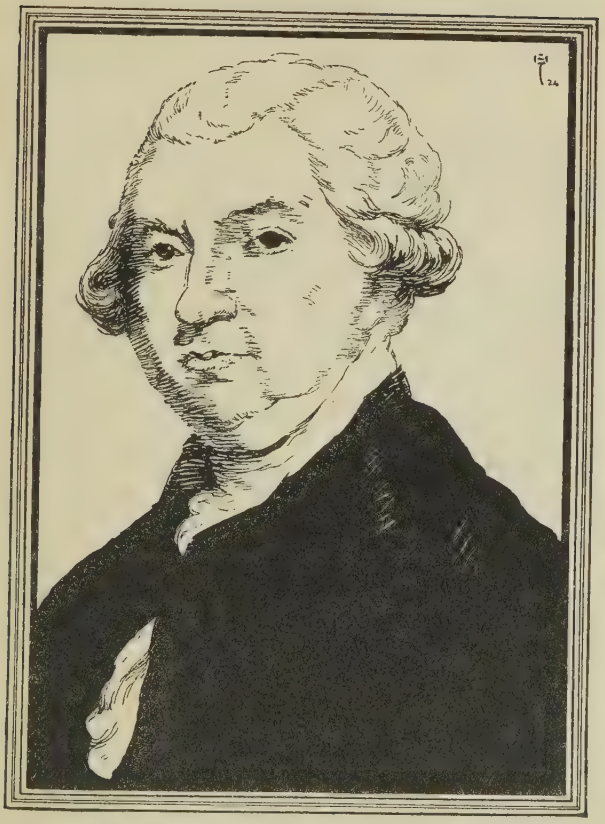
Dr. Johnson.—Samuel Johnson more than any other figure sums up in his person the general characteristics of his time; its vigorous didacticism and awakened sensibility. Dr. Johnson lives rather as a personality than as an author, for despite the sound criticism that scintillates from time to time in the ponderous *Lives of the Poets* (1779–81), the flashes of beauty in his novel *Rasselas* (1759), and the rough genial humour that illuminates his Essay work in the *Idler* and *Rambler*, he ranks as a writer on a lower level than the majority of the men who form his circle, in every department which he essayed; his prose has neither the vitality of Fielding, the charm of Goldsmith, the sonority of Gibbon, nor the eloquence of Burke. Yet as a personality he surmounts them all, and was looked upon as the guide and leader of his brilliant coterie.

His Characteristics; Sense, Tenderness, Humour, Humanity.—Without the illuminating discipleship of Boswell, it would be hard for us to account for this fact, but his biographer has supplied the key. And we realize to-day that the best part of Johnson never found literary expression, but lives in his table-talk. His strong sense, his unfailing tenderness, his rough, contrary but wholesome humour;—in short, the sturdy humanity of the burly Dictator; these are the things which keep Johnson's name alive to-day.

Few better things were said of him than the grateful tribute of Goldsmith : " He has nothing about him of the bear but the skin."

Goldsmith compared with Johnson.—Oliver Goldsmith presents a striking contrast both in his person and work. As a personality, his quaint, inconsequential manner and naïve simplicity—which not even the harsh school of experience could alter—contrast strongly with Johnson's authoritative dogmatism and worldly wisdom. As a writer, what could be more unlike the massive pomposity of Johnson than the clear, delicate, and limpid style of Goldsmith ? Working always under heavy disabilities, he has left us *The Vicar of Wakefield* (1766), a novel which, of its kind, has become a classic ; a body of verse, notably *The Traveller* (1764) and *The Deserted Village* (1770), of great sweetness and charm ; two comedies, *The Good-Natur'd Man* (1768) and *She Stoops to Conquer* (1773), the latter of which still holds the stage ; and *Essays*, after the *Spectator* fashion, of the highest quality. He is a poet of talent ; a prose writer of genius. The Essays in *The Citizen of the World* show a play of fancy and a whimsical humour shot with pathos, that place them beside the best work of Leigh Hunt, and all but the best work of " Elia."

Edmund Burke.—Edmund Burke is another of the Johnson circle, and like his fellow-countryman, Goldsmith, came over also from Ireland to try his fortune in London. There is a warmth and colour about his style which we shall not find in any other prose-man of the day ; though it has to be remembered that he was an orator first, and rhetorical methods conditioned his prose from first to last. His study in æstheticism, *Inquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*, secured him in 1757 an introduction to Johnson. This and his *On Causes of the Present Discontents* (1770) are his most important contributions to literature.



JAMES BOSWELL

From a pen-drawing by
E. Heber Thompson

Historians: Hume, Robertson, and Gibbon.—Historical writing is raised into literary importance by David Hume, Dr. Robertson, and Edward Gibbon. Of these three, Gibbon is unquestionably the greatest, for although in common with the others he is lacking in sympathetic insight, he has greater imaginative force and a more considerable knowledge. His monumental *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (1776–88), if wanting in the flexibility and warmth which we find in Burke, is at its best distinguished and impressive.

Philosophy and Social Politics.—In the realm of Philosophy and Social Politics we have Hume's *Treatises on Human Nature* (1739), in which, following Locke, he limits knowledge to phenomena cognizable by experience; and Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations* (1776), postulating labour as the source of wealth. The Evangelical Revival and the work of *Wesley* and *Whitefield* gave literary significance to some of the devotional writings of the time, notably the *Sermons* of Dr. Chalmers, but on the whole the philosopher and the theologian of the eighteenth century show but little grace of style or charm of manner.

In the miscellaneous literature of the day mention must be made of Sir Joshua Reynolds's pleasant *Discourses on Painting* (1769–90), and the light, amusing *Letters* of Horace Walpole.

2. THE NOVEL

The sensibility that marked the later years of the eighteenth century, though amply reflected in Johnson's personality, finds its fullest literary expression in the fiction that sprang of a sudden into popularity. The common-sense ideal haunts the novel no less than the essay, and is especially emphasized in Fielding's outlook on life; but there are many indications to show a rising in the temperature of our emotional and imaginative life.

Despite the promising start made by prose fiction in the sixteenth century, the stir of new and distracting social interests in the seventeenth proved unfavourable to the development of the novel.

But the work of the Diarists, John Bunyan's Allegories, as well as English Journalism—all these literary forms which fostered and encouraged pictures of current life and manners, helped forward the novel. And when the Drama began to decline in popularity, the Novel stepped into its place.

To that enterprising journalist, Defoe, must be accorded the honour of pioneering the new fiction of contemporary actualities. Defoe's fiction, however, had two great defects—lack of sentiment and lack of humour. The new school of novelists speedily made good those deficiencies.

Richardson and the Sentimental Note. — Samuel Richardson followed Defoe in dealing with contemporary life, but suffused his scenes with a sentimental pathos which promptly took the town. This stout, mild-mannered little man, who lived the life of an industrious tradesman, with less stuff of adventure in the whole of his career than Defoe had in a few months, became the idol of the hour, and moved in an adoring crowd of sobbing female worshippers. How account for his amazing popularity?

Largely, because he had a ready instinct for woman's ways. From early days he had studied the sex, and had once written love letters for some young women; and in an age when sentiment had been shut outside the garden of poesy, and eschewed so rigorously in much of the prose, its sudden entrance into fiction was hailed by many with delight. It is not easy to find the virtue in *Pamela, or Virtue Rewarded* (1740), but its sentimentality brims over, and mawkish as it may seem to the modern reader, it was avidly swallowed by the readers of the day.

Richardson followed this up by a more legitimate

appeal to the emotions in *Clarissa Harlowe* (1747). So firm an affection did *Clarissa* and her sorrows evoke that Colley Cibber swore if she should die he would no longer believe in Providence. His last novel, *Sir Charles Grandison* (1754), is of extraordinary length, even in an age of lengthy fiction ; but despite this, its utter lack of humour, and the priggishness of the eighteenth century egoist, Sir Charles, it contains some skilful analysis of character. Sentimental analysis is a commonplace in modern fiction. But Richardson was its first exponent. Prolix and artificial to a degree, in style, the discerning reader will recognize genuine observation and real emotional power beneath all the verbiage and egregious sentimentalities. And therein lies the secret of his power. Sterne, Fanny Burney, and even Jane Austen show traces of his influence ; while Diderot and De Musset in France, and Goethe in Germany, testify to his power.

Fielding and the Humorous Note.—If to Richardson we owe the note of sentiment, dashing and versatile Henry Fielding may claim to have imported the note of humour. Starting as a parodist of Richardson in his *Joseph Andrews* (1742), he soon discovered his own powers in *Tom Jones* (1749), a novel as superior in constructive power to Richardson's as it is in its genial and tolerant outlook on life. In analytical force and subtlety he is inferior to his contemporary, but his was the fresher and more vigorous mind. He attempted to paint a faithful picture of human life as he saw it, and in reproducing the broad features of town and country life in the mid-eighteenth century he is unsurpassed.

Fielding's full-blooded humour and his inventive faculty are best shown in his two early novels. In his last, *Amelia* (1751), the underlying tenderness in his nature finds ampler outlet. Here, also, his powers of satire are more finely and keenly displayed. None of his novels, however, so fully exhibit his satiric genius

as does his life of that arch rogue, *Jonathan Wild* (1743).

While Richardson and Fielding were at the height of their fame, Tobias Smollett published his first novel, *Roderick Random* (1748). Like Fielding, he was considerably influenced in the form of his work by the Spanish picaresque novel.

In constructive power, Smollett falls far behind Fielding ; but in descriptive power he is fully as vital and arresting. In experience of life, Smollett had the advantage. English rural society, and aristocratic society, are better known to Fielding ; but Smollett's years in Scotland and his knowledge of the "*nautical* multitude" provided him with material to which Fielding could lay no claim. In his own day he was vastly popular, and Scott put him on a level with Fielding. In our own day his reputation has certainly declined, probably because of the more limited range of his appeal. As a literary artist he is, on the whole, inferior to Richardson, Fielding, Sterne, and Goldsmith. But for infectious high spirits, and in the depiction of oddities, he has no equal save Dickens. As for his sea worthies, they are inimitable—overcoloured maybe, but abounding in life and prodigal in comic invention.

Tom Bowling in *Roderick Random*, and Hawser Trunnion in *Peregrine Pickle*, to say nothing of Hatchway and Pipes, have the salt savour of the sea about them.

His best book is *Humphry Clinker* (1771). Lacking the animal spirits of its predecessors, it is the richest in humorous observation of character.

Laurence Sterne revives the sentimental art again, though with a lighter touch.

Symmetry and cohesion are flung to the winds.

Sterne and the Note of Subtlety.—There is no more chaotic novel in literature than *Tristram Shandy* (1760) ; and *A Sentimental Journey* (1768) is little

better. But the leisurely *Tristram Shandy* is one long parenthesis ; a colossal aside. Yet the chaos is intentional, the incoherence deliberate. It is a trick to arrest the reader, and certainly succeeds. Sterne's frank and impudent neglect of form—his buttonholing pose ; his inconsequential confidences, are undeniably attractive ; for behind it all there is the humorist of fine sensibility, the subtle artist.

Here is a fair specimen of Sterne's humour :

" It was a consuming vexation to my father, that my mother never asked the meaning of a thing she did not understand. ' That she is not a woman of science,' my father would say, ' is her misfortune ; but she might ask a question.' My mother never did. In short, she went out of the world, at last, without knowing whether it turned round or stood still. My father had officiously told her above a thousand times which way it was, but she always forgot."

This sly, evasive humour is quite other than the breezy robustiousness of Fielding or the exuberant extravagance of Smollett, while the creation of Uncle Toby and the wonderful little scene with the Ass of Lyons are in themselves sufficient to vindicate Sterne's genuine though fitful faculty for pathos.

Goldsmith.—The Idyllic Note.—Goldsmith's *Vicar of Wakefield* (1766) is in very different manner. Goldsmith succeeds by virtue of his exquisitely lucid style and simple humanity.

The *Vicar* triumphs not because of any special outstanding quality—Goldsmith derives something from each of his predecessors—but through its pervasive idyllic charm.

The Women Novelists.—Frances Burney's *Evelina* (1778) gives us a picture of fashionable eighteenth-century life from the woman's point of view. And in its more limited way, *Evelina* is as typical of its time as is *Tom Jones*.

OLIVER GOLDSMITH

From a pen-drawing by
E. Heber Thompson

Miss Burney may be remembered, moreover, as the first woman novelist of any considerable distinction.

Mrs. Radcliffe and others who wrote fiction during the closing years of the century belong in style and treatment to the next age. They were forerunners of the Romantic movement. And the last woman writer to carry on the traditions of the eighteenth century is Scott's youthful contemporary, JANE AUSTEN. Living during the early years of the Romantic movement, she was completely untouched by any side of it. More truly even than Frances Burney is she the feminine contemporary of Fielding; and her strong sense of humour kept her from the sentimental absurdities that abound in the eighteenth-century novelists. Faithful observation, personal detachment from her subject, and a delicate sense of ironic comedy are Jane Austen's chief characteristics as a writer. The daughter of a country rector, and brought up in the quiet backwater of a small provincial town, Steventon in Hants, her life was singularly uneventful. For most of her time she lived at home; her longest journey was to Bath, her most exciting experience, probably, private theatricals. No serious love attachment is gathered about her; she was a good daughter and sister; a writer from sheer love of writing. Like Charlotte Brontë she was a story-teller from a child. In person tall and graceful, with good features and curly brown hair; in disposition serene, gentle, unemotional, and dryly humorous. She wrote seven novels, *Pride and Prejudice* (1813), *Northanger Abbey* (1798), *Sense and Sensibility* (1811), *Mansfield Park*, *Emma*, and *Persuasion* (1814–16).

One, *Lady Susan*, was never published. There was also a fragment, *The Watsons*, never finished. The material at her hand was not promising; the gossip and scandal of a little country town, where tea-time was a crisis in one's life, and a subscription ball a turning-point in one's career; when adventure ex-

pressed itself in country walks (usually with a chaperon), and tragedy hinged upon the non-appearance of that agreeable young man who danced so well at the ball. And yet while no writer is freer from dullness, no story-teller impresses us with such a sense of ease and delicate tact as she. She knew her limitations, and never went outside them. And within her narrow limits she is supreme. She made of tattle a fine art. Tennyson expressed the sentiments of many when he said at Lyme Regis, "Don't talk to me of the Duke of Monmouth! Show me where Louisa Musgrove fell."

CHAPTER V

The Romantic Revival (*c.* 1780–1832)

Introduction.—No label can accurately describe a period so rich and varied in achievement as the fifty years following the death of Johnson. Yet, while allowing for those distinctive qualities that a genius gives to, rather than takes from, an age, there will be found certain underlying characteristics linking the writers of the period together in a masonic brotherhood.

What is Romanticism? What is this emotional tide which ebbs and flows throughout literary history; reaching high-water mark in the age of Shakespeare and of Wordsworth, yet taking on so varying a complexion in the work, say, of a Marlowe or a Scott?

Romanticism surely is a widening of the imaginative horizon, a sharpening of emotional sensibility. At its onset it drives those who feel its spell into strange by-paths of thought and feeling away from the broad highway of ordinary human experience. It was thus with Marlowe in his world-moving visions; thus with Scott in his fervent mediævalism.

But ultimately it brings us back to the highway—only at a greater elevation. We seek it first in the thunder and the earthquake of the fantastic and bizarre, and find it after all in the still small voice of everyday life. In other words, Romanticism is not opposed to Reality. It is Reality transfigured by new powers of vision and feeling. In the full sense of the word, Marlowe and Scott are realists because of their

Romanticism. Marlowe hinted at it in his *Edward II.*, though he died too young to realize its full implication. Scott realized it perfectly in his faithful pictures of Scottish life and character.

Stated simply and generally, the features most insistent at this period are, *the spiritualizing of Nature* and *the humanizing of Social Life.*

The Romantic Revival was the result of no one cause. Broadly speaking, it was the inevitable corollary of the Renascence and Reformation. The dignity and importance of man as man, the glories of the world of nature, these ideas, of which we hear so much at the close of the eighteenth century, were born centuries before, and had been gradually working in men's minds through all the political unrest of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The first flowering of Romanticism in England, the bloody horrors of the French Revolution, the kindling of a new idealistic philosophy in Germany under Kant and Hegel, the political upheaval in America, all these things were but varying symptoms of a general fermentation that had lasted since the fifteenth century.

It is well to remember this, for although the social theories of Rousseau, roughly embodied in the familiar phrase, the "return to Nature," did materially affect doctrinaires like William Godwin, and through Godwin, Shelley; and although the battle-cry of the Revolutionaries, "Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity," impressed itself on the youthful imagination of Wordsworth and Coleridge, the general characteristics of the Revival suggested above were collateral with the Revolution, not derived from it. They arose, as we may see, in verse and fiction during the lifetime of Pope, and impressed many an imagination long before the overthrow of the Bastille had given these ideas a more urgent vitality.

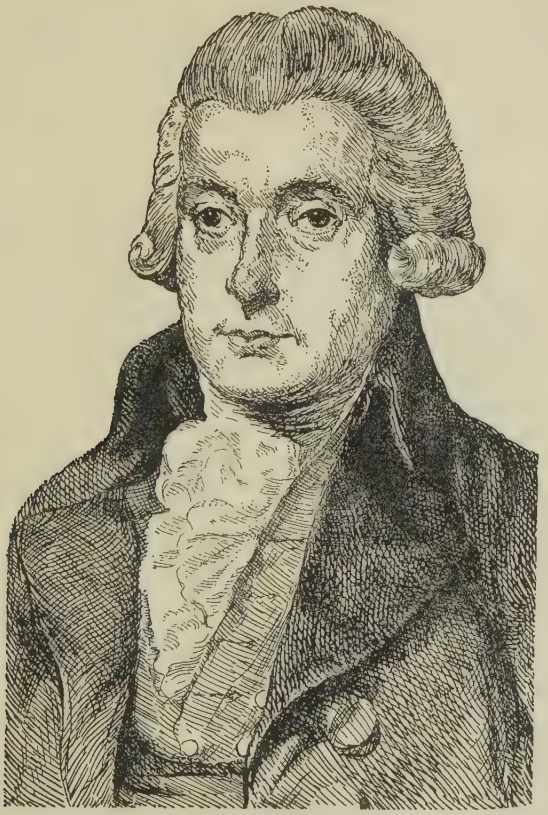
As regards the passion for Nature, so insistent among the poets and certain story-tellers of the time, this may

be said: it is not that men like Wordsworth and Shelley cared for Nature *more* than did Shakespeare, or in our own time Tennyson, but they cared in a *different* way. Wordsworth found brooding and tranquillizing thought at the heart of Nature; Shelley an ardent and persuasive love. In other words, they spiritualized Nature. To Shakespeare the primrose was a pretty yellow flower, and "nothing more." To Tennyson, the landscape was an exquisite stage property, in which human emotions might be pictorially framed. Shakespeare, with the hearty objectivity of his age, loved Nature without questioning how and wherefore. Tennyson, with the introspective tendency of his age, put his sentiment under the microscope, and found that modern science had stripped Nature of her pontifical robe of metaphysics.

The Spiritualizing of Nature.—Now this spiritualizing of Nature started as early as Thomson's *Seasons;* it is as yet more implicit than explicit, but as we proceed, growing clearer through the verse of William Collins and Gray; until in Burns, Blake, and Cowper, it is exultant in note, and only awaits the shaping imagination of Wordsworth and his great contemporaries to give it consummate artistic expression.

It was because many thought they saw in mediævalism a richer inspiration for the mysterious forces they felt about them, that they turned from modern conditions of life towards the folk-lore and legendary wealth of the Middle Ages. Only gradually did they realize that to find this element of wonder and strangeness, they need not delve in the remote past. It was at their hand. It arose from the natural simplicity which they lauded—the mysticism of everyday life, the magic of the Earth, the witchery of the Seasons.

An ordinary sunset, the garrulity of an old seaman, the rain-bearing wind, the song of a nightingale; these are the things that inspire to great achievement a Wordsworth, a Coleridge, a Shelley, a Keats.



WILLIAM COWPER

The Humanizing of Social Life.—The other feature of the time is closely connected with the heightened appreciation of natural beauty, for it impelled an attraction towards simple and elemental qualities everywhere. This made for the humanizing of life, and gave warmth and tenderness and imaginative sensibility to both the poetry and prose of the age.

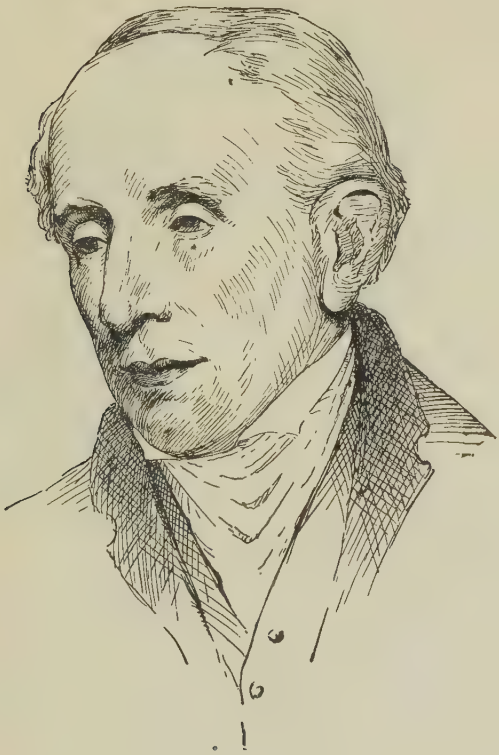
I. POETRY

In dealing with the poetry of the time, so abundant in quantity as well as rich in quality, it will be convenient to treat of it around these three dominant personalities : Wordsworth, Scott, and Shelley.

The earliest forerunners of the Romantic Revival were James Macpherson, with his version of the old Celtic legend of *Ossian* (1762), and Bishop Percy, whose collection of old ballads, *Reliques of Ancient Poetry*, appeared in 1764. These two writers stimulated interest in ancient ballad verse and legend, and prepared the way for the precocious Chatterton with his ballad imitations. Then comes BLAKE, who expressed in his *Songs of Innocence* (1789) both the mysticism and the homely delight of common things ; and thus is godfather both to *The Ancient Mariner* and Wordsworth's pastoral domesticities.

The same love of simple joys animates the work of COWPER. These two poets foreshadow the work of Wordsworth, and hint at the kinship with all sentient things which is the link uniting Wordsworth and Shelley.

William Wordsworth.—He led a quiet, uneventful life spent partly in the south-west of England, but chiefly among the English Lakes. There were two influences in his poetic life : that of his friend Coleridge, which led to the joint production of the famous *Lyrical Ballads* in 1798, and that of his sister Dorothy. The first was the more considerable, the latter the



WILLIAM WORDSWORTH

more persistent. Otherwise no poet has proved less susceptible to the influence of other minds than Wordsworth. When quite a youth, the beauty of a sunrise stirred within him a sense of his calling, to be " a dedicated spirit " to Nature. And Nature never had a more faithful devotee.

The matter of the universe was for Wordsworth merely the vesture of a great spiritual power interpenetrating Nature ; a rock, a flower, a sunset, a mountain torrent, the beauty of a girl, were for him varying manifestations of this unifying principle. This is the underlying thought of *Tintern Abbey*.

And this peace he finds everywhere at the heart of Nature, " a central peace subsisting at the heart of endless agitation," which fills the poet's heart with a deep, abiding joy—not the ecstatic rapture of Shelley, but a rich, measured contentment. It is the burden of that autobiographical and philosophic fragment, *The Prelude* (1805).

And thus his love of Nature is transferred to the shepherd and simple dalesman, and after them to Humanity at large. He is the poet of Man just as Browning is the poet of Men.

Samuel Taylor Coleridge.—Supremely plastic in imagination, and susceptible to every cross-current of emotion, Coleridge differs widely in temperament from Wordsworth, with his emotional frugality and steady oneness of vision.

In no other poet of the time is the sense of mystery more finely developed. His mastery of rhythm and metre gives an art, which is almost artless in its naïve magic, to the old ballad measure of *The Ancient Mariner* (1798). And in reproducing the ghostly atmosphere of mediæval romance, he is unequalled in our literature. Rossetti alone can approach him with any measure of success. Scott, so adept in dealing with the human elements of mediævalism, failed in reproducing its supernaturalism, both in his verse and prose.

SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE

The years of Coleridge's best poetry are from 1794 to 1800. After that the tenuous but precious stream of his poesy dries up; and for the remaining thirty years it is to the metaphysician, critic, and brilliant discursive talker of Highgate Hill that we look. His early verse is turgid and imitative of the eighteenth-century models. But the comradeship of Wordsworth had a quick ripening effect on his genius.

The most remarkable thing about *The Ancient Mariner* and *Christabel* is the mingling of the mystical quality with a stark simplicity of phrasing. What could at once be more homely and more imaginative than these lines,—

> "The moving moon went up the sky
> And nowhere did abide;
> Softly she was going up
> And a star or two beside."

The Poetry of Lowly Life.—In dealing with scenes of lowly life, Crabbe had as forerunner William Shenstone with his *Schoolmistress* (1742). He was succeeded by Bloomfield, who wrote *The Farmer Boy* (1798); Ebenezer Elliott, the vigorous and picturesque *Corn Law Rhymer;* and John Clare, author of *Poems Descriptive of Rural Life* (1820).

In imaginative power, George Crabbe is greatly inferior to either Wordsworth or Coleridge, but he had fully as vivid a sense of the richness of everyday life, and a ready faculty for describing simply, unpretentiously, and truly the lives of the poor, as in *The Parish Register* (1807) and *Tales in Verse* (1812).

Scott and his School.—Passing to the Scott group of Poets, we realize that here we have to deal with a more definitely historical atmosphere. As a forerunner of Scott there is Allan Ramsay, the friend of Pope, who wrote simply and feelingly about Scottish life.

Scott, saturated with the Border Minstrelsy, and

inspired by Percy's *Reliques*, gives fresh life to the Border Romances in *The Lay of the Last Minstrel* (1805), *Marmion* (1808), and *The Lady of the Lake* (1810). If he lacked the lyric passion of Burns, and the witchery of Coleridge and Keats, he is unexcelled in narrative force and clearness.

Closely identified with Scott are John Leyden, and James Hogg, "The Ettrick Shepherd," and their ballad poetry is rich in imaginative beauty.

The battle chants of William Motherwell, and the stirring war songs of Thomas Campbell, are further memorable additions to the plentiful output of contemporary Scottish verse. What Campbell did for Britain, Thomas Moore achieves for Ireland. He has less force than Campbell, but more sweetness of melody; though posterity has not ratified the high opinion of his contemporaries.

Robert Southey belongs to this group by virtue of his picturesque, historical sense. Not content with exploiting the folk-lore of his country, he pushed Eastward and attained his greatest vogue in dealing with Oriental subjects: *Thalaba* (1801) and *The Curse of Kehama* (1810).

The humblest of the group, though popular enough in their day, are James Montgomery and Mrs. Hemans; they exemplify the spirit of romanticism in its shallowest expressions, though their verse at its best is touched by sweetness and pictorial skill.

Shelley and his Circle.—In the poetry passed under review, the main thing has been the reiteration of the importance of ordinary folk and commonplace things. Those catchwords of the Revolution, Equality and Fraternity, have received varied illustration; but there has been little insistence upon Liberty. Wordsworth and Coleridge, at first enthusiastic in the cause of Revolutionary France, speedily recanted their early faith, and a strong element of conservatism enters into not only their work, but the work of most of their

followers and adherents. There is democratic sentiment in Burns, but that of Scott, insistent as it is, affects his prose far more than his verse.

Byron.—When we come to Byron, however, the bolder and freer aspects of Romanticism are to the fore. Lacking the intensity and concentration of Wordsworth, the subtlety of Coleridge, and the sensitive receptivity of Keats, he possessed a breadth of imagination and a caustic wit that gave him a distinctive place among the poets of the age. He shares with his great contemporaries an intense love of Nature, especially in her wilder aspects, and in *Childe Harold* (*c.* 1812) and *The Siege of Corinth* (1815) there are vivid and spirited passages of scenic description.

In style and temperament he is a curious blend of the age of satire and the age of romanticism. There is something of Pope's method in his metrical experiments, something also of the colloquial ease and humour of Dryden in such satirical poems as *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers* (1809). But mingled with this there is the passion for Nature, and his sympathy with the revolutionary spirit.

He has been accused of insincerity, and insincere he could be when he wished. But it was a deliberate insincerity ; an actor's pose. And there was a certain elemental greatness in the man despite the limelight attitudinizing. In that strange mixture of worldly wisdom and poetic beauty, *Don Juan* (1819), we see Byron at his best. His songs lack the delicacy of Shelley's, but they have a fine lilt and music of their own, and

> " She walks in beauty, like the night
> Of cloudless climes and starry skies "

will take its place among the best lyrics of our literature.

Percy Bysshe Shelley.—Shelley is emphatically the poet of eager, sensitive youth ; not the animal youth of Byron, but the spiritual youth of the visionary and reformer. In his earlier years Godwin was the figure which most readily impressed his mobile imagination, and in many of the poems dealing with social subjects —*Queen Mab* (1813) and the *Revolt of Islam* (1818)— he is little more than Godwin made musical. In later life Wordsworth's influence is more clearly discernible. But the most potent inspiration came from Greek literature, first brought before his notice by his kindly friend and critic, Peacock.

Shelley, like his admirer Browning, needed the sunshine of the South to rouse his finest powers. *Alastor* (1816) is the splendid product of his first acquaintance with the Alps ; and his loveliest lyrics were written under Italian skies.

Two notes dominate all Shelley's work, epic, narrative, and lyric alike—his devotion to liberty, and his wholehearted belief in love, as the prime factor in all human progress. The Revolution to Shelley was much more than a political upheaval ; it was a spiritual awakening, the beginning of a new life. All that was evil in life he traced to Slavery. Natural development for him was the only development. He believed that men would never be men, never give what was best in them, until they could give it out freely. Master yourself, he cries, and external freedom will enable you to realize your utmost capabilities. These are the thoughts underlying *The Revolt of Islam*, *The Masque of Anarchy*, *Julian and Maddalo*, and the noble lyric drama *Prometheus Unbound*. Liberty, in Shelley's eyes, was freedom from external restraint. It is opposed to licence, for to " rule the Empire of Self " was with Shelley a moral necessity. What then, if force is withdrawn from Society, is to take its place ? Shelley's answer is, Love. Love is to reign supreme, for only in an atmosphere of love can liberty efficiently

work. Love is with Shelley a transcendental force kindling all things into beauty. In his treatment of it we miss the more concrete touch of Keats, and the homeliness of Wordsworth's steady affection. And there are times when his dream pictures float away, like exquisite bubbles, that melt even as we watch them.

But both the strength and weakness of Shelley's verse lie in the fact that his fine idealism and warm human sympathies are clad in shadowy fantasies and lyrics delicate as gossamer. Thought and feeling are etherealized, till their presence is discerned only as one discerns the things of dreamland. He is the Oberon of poets; and even in his most impassioned songs, in such matchless lyrics as *The World's great age begins anew*, where our rough guttural tongue becomes an exquisite lyric cry—even here it is as if some fairy child were lamenting the sins and cruelties of mankind: Oberon turned social reformer. Whatever may be the fate of his longer poems, his lyrics are sure to live so long as rhythmic beauty and elfin music appeal to humankind.

John Keats.—Keats has more imaginative affinity with Coleridge than with Shelley, and has the same Celtic blood in his veins. The formative influences in his work are the mediæval Italian verse of Leigh Hunt, the pastoral sweetness of Spenser, and the inspiration of Greek art first gained through the medium of Chapman's *Homer*. But his individual genius, though shaped by these influences, soon placed him among the foremost names of his age, while in certain directions he is pre-eminent. The naturalism of Wordsworth's School is blended here with an extraordinary delicacy of observation, which gives his scenic pictures a unique charm. For instance:

> "A little noiseless noise among the leaves,
> Born of the very sigh that silence heaves."

When he first began to write, the wealth of his perceptive life bewildered and embarrassed him. Gradually he found speech, and although an Oriental extravagance of emotion breaks out from time to time, no poet has excelled Keats at his best for splendour of workmanship. *Endymion* (1818), *Isabella* (1818), and *The Eve of St. Agnes* (1819), splendid in colouring as they are, tend to fatigue the eye, because of the excess of ornament. But the *Odes* are among the imperishable things of English verse by virtue of their Hellenic clarity and chiselled beauty, and the poetry comes naturally, as Keats was wont to declare poetry should, "as leaves to a tree." Indeed the thought that inspired him as a poet, the thought condensed into those well-known lines in the *Ode on a Grecian Urn* (1819):

> "Beauty is truth, truth beauty,—that is all
> Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know,"

lies at the very root of Ruskin's teaching, Pater's philosophy, and Morris's social gospel. The insistence on a spiritual principle carried with it new democratic ideals of which probably Keats never thought, but which were to bring literature and life into far more intimate relations; and it seems somewhat strange that the poet, whose work was the most secluded from the rush and turmoil of daily life, should have reminded us so insistently of this eternal fact.

Among the other poets of the romantic revival, belonging especially to this group, is Walter Savage Landor, also profoundly influenced by Greek art. He excels in elaboration of detail and choice sobriety of phrase, but his more characteristic work lies in his *Imaginary Conversations* (1824–29), where his rich, scholarly imagination and exuberant vitality found congenial outlet.

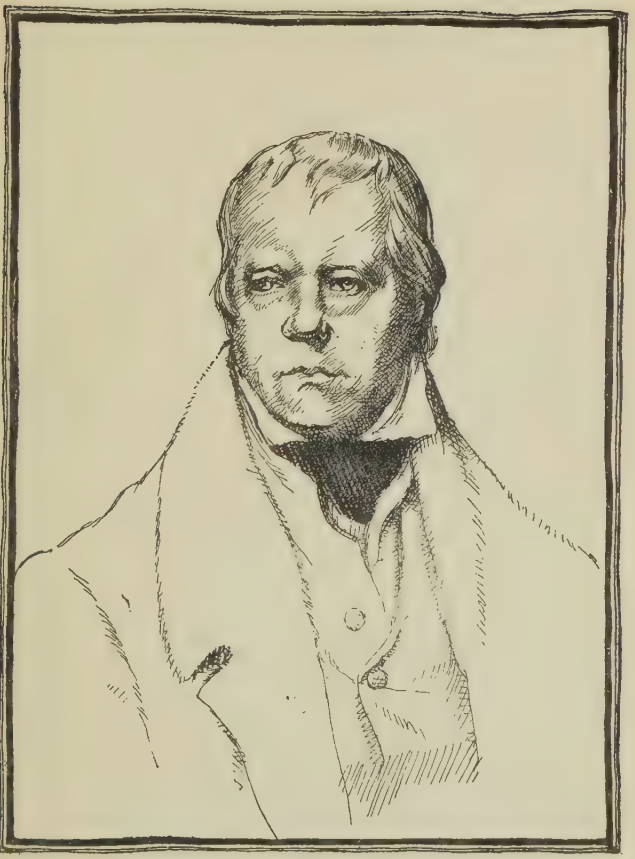
2. THE NOVEL

Just as Macpherson's *Ossian* and Bishop Percy's *Reliques* heralded the romantic revival in poetry, so did Horace Walpole's *Castle of Otranto* (1764) proclaim its entrance into fiction. The story with its crude supernaturalism is absurd enough. But the essential thing about the book is that it indicated the hankering after romance and mystery which was beginning to beset the writers of the time.

William Beckford, in his Oriental romance *Vathek* (1782), improves upon Walpole in the craftsmanship of "blood-curdling"; and Mrs. Radcliffe, who succeeded, was certainly an artist of considerable graphic power. Her *Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794), with all its extravagances, shows a very genuine appreciation of the sublime and terrible in Nature, and if only for her influence upon such men as Scott and Byron, she deserves the notice of the literary student. It is no exaggeration to say that she brought the passion for Nature, which is so marked a feature of the romantic revival, into English fiction.

In Walpole and Mrs. Radcliffe the background is projected into a past age, but there is no definite historical atmosphere. Romanticism, however, naturally favoured the growth of the historical novel. Moreover, the greater attention given to history in the brilliant work of Gibbon, the pleasant, palatable experiments in this direction of Goldsmith, together with the interest in the past excited by Walpole, made favourably for the production of historical romance, and prepared the way for Sir Walter Scott.

The Note of Mystery and Terror.—The note of mystery and terror which Walpole struck, half in joke, and Mrs. Radcliffe wholly in earnest, was intensified by "Monk" Lewis and Charles Robert Maturin. Lewis was an expert in the making of



SIR WALTER SCOTT

From a pen-drawing by
E. Heber Thompson

horrors, but he is entirely lacking in Mrs. Radcliffe's artistic sincerity. Maturin, an Irish clergyman of French descent, imparts a religious fanaticism to his supernatural horrors. His most ambitious work was *Melmoth the Wanderer* (1820). In Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1817) we find supernaturalism and philosophic speculation blended. This romance is a bridge between the pure romance of the Radcliffe school and the doctrinaire romantic novels of William Godwin. In Godwin's *Caleb Williams* (1794), *St. Leon* (1799), and *Fleetwood* (1804), there are distinct traces of the school of mystery and terror, combined with much severely logical reasoning, largely inspired by Rousseau's educational theories.

Among his successors we have Mrs. Opie, whose *Adeline Mowbray, or the Mother and Daughter* (1804), is influenced by Godwin ; and Mrs. Inchbald, with her *Simple Story* (1791) and *Nature and Art* (1796)—educational stories of real power.

To this time also belongs Thomas Day's *Sandford and Merton* (1783–89)—a scheme for parents, and incidentally a rule of life for children, more remarkable for earnest purpose than persuasive charm.

The educational novelist who used romanticism to sugar-coat didacticism culminated in Maria Edgeworth. Unlike her predecessors she had a lively style and a genuine gift of satire, and in *Castle Rackrent* (1800) she gives a very spirited picture of the Irish life which she knew so well ; and her humorous portrayal of character and tenderness of heart moved Scott to enthusiastic praise. He did not trouble much about her theories, but admired her greatly as a painter of Irish national life.

Sir Walter Scott.—Scott is the greatest novelist of the romantic revival, because, while seizing upon the picturesque elements of mediævalism, he does not reject the great tradition of the eighteenth century in the direction of transcript from life. His romanticism

is tempered with cool common sense. Why does he write of the past in place of his own age? He does so because his imagination lived naturally in the past. He is an historical novelist by temperament, not by profession. Charles Reade reconstructed the past with the art of a brilliant journalist; Thackeray refashioned it as a sympathetic critic; George Eliot treated it from the scholar's standpoint. Scott simply breathed it; it was part and parcel of his thinking life. The subtler sides of romanticism find more notable expression elsewhere. But no one had a keener sense for the pomp and pageantry of a bygone age.

The first novel appeared in 1814, and for the next sixteen years he held the stage of fiction, publishing twenty-nine stories in all. No other novelist save Dickens appealed to so wide a circle, or more entirely captured the fancy of the day. When asked for his opinion of *Waverley*, Lord Holland said, "We did not one of us go to bed last night—nothing slept but my gout." All Scott's best work is marked by three characteristics: a genius for vitalizing the past, a love of nature, and a sturdy humanity.

Throughout his life he was absorbing the folk-lore of his country, and he exhaled antiquarianism as a flower exhales fragrance. There is therefore about his books a fine atmosphere of improvisation; while his rich and varied knowledge flowed from his pen with the ease and naturalness of fireside gossip. He did not rhapsodize over the past as Gibbon did, or moralize about it, from an eighteenth-century niche, as Johnson had done; he dramatized it, made it live before us. There have been many historical romancers more accurate than he in the externals of his tale; none so true to the inmost spirit of the age he is depicting.

And this delight and relish for the past was warmed by a genuine love of Nature. He loved not merely the institutions of his country, but his country's soil;

loved it as a child loves, for its associations : and he told Washington Irving that if he did not see the heather at least once a year, he thought he would die. Yet a beautiful landscape to him meant little without the human touch in it. Sanctify it with some legend or personal association, and he took it to his heart at once.

A Tory in politics, he was a Democrat in feeling. None of his characters are more vital than those racy of the soil. The heroes and heroines are pleasant enough in their way, but it is a shadowy way. The peasants, the antiquaries, the bailies, are exuberant realities. He is a clever painter of historical portraits —*e.g.* Louis XI. ; and the Homer of Scottish national life.

Scott's Contemporaries.—Two friends of Scott achieved distinction in tales of Scottish life—Susan Ferrier and John Galt.

John Galt was an Ayrshire man, who had travelled abroad and met Byron. His one unequivocal success was *Annals of the Parish* (1821), where his vigour and sense of humour are happily displayed.

Galt did for the Scottish parish what Miss Mitford did for the English village. Each excelled in miniature painting.

Susan Ferrier wrote three novels only : *Marriage* (1818), *The Inheritance* (1824), and *Destiny* (1831), each of which made its mark, but she steadily refused the blandishments of publishers to add to their number. She was born in Edinburgh, and excelled in depicting the lesser Scottish gentry.

Scott's Successors.—Among the more remarkable of Scott's numerous successors in romantic fiction are, William Harrison Ainsworth, who turned history into vigorous melodrama ; James Grant, whose *Romance of War* (1846) is a picturesque military novel of no little power ; and that prolific writer Bulwer Lytton in his earlier phase.

Apart from the writers of historical romance, there are James Justinian Morier, the author of a vivid picture of Persian life, *Hajji Baba* (1824), which has in it the discursive flavour of *Gil Blas ;* and Thomas Love Peacock, the fine scholar and wit, who developed a new vein in fiction in his humorous fantasies. Of these *Headlong Hall* (1816), *Nightmare Abbey* (1818), and *Melincourt* (1817) are the happiest. He was the friend of Shelley, and as a literary figure is a piquant blend of the critical, ironic eighteenth century and the fervent romanticism of the early nineteenth.

3. PROSE OTHER THAN FICTION

Criticism and the Essayists.—Burke and Goldsmith to some extent were the forerunners of the prose of the romantic revival—Burke with his sensibility to beauty ; Goldsmith with his delicate humour. But one feature of the prose came unheralded and with the suddenness of a tropical sunrise. The effect of romanticism upon the critical faculty was such as to inaugurate a new school of literary appreciation, with which are associated the names of Coleridge, Lamb, De Quincey, and Hazlitt.

Divergent in character and genius, these men were animated by a common ideal: to interpret, through the sympathetic imagination, the literature of an age by the light of its own standards. The new criticism therefore is at once historical and æsthetic—historical, in so far as it judged a man's work relatively to his time ; æsthetic, inasmuch as it tried to recreate the work itself, and appreciate it as the expression of an individual temperament. How widely remote is this from the absolute standard of criticism implied in the famous " This will never do . . ." of Jeffrey !

Charles Lamb was the first to point out the poetic richness of the Renascence drama at large. Thomas de Quincey showed the way to an appreciа-

tion of modern German literature, afterwards amplified on more catholic lines by Carlyle. William Hazlitt, in his *Lectures on the English Poets* (1818), pioneered a wider and more interpretative spirit of our national verse, and Coleridge gave the impulse to modern Shakespearean criticism; and he was the first to deal with the whole of Shakespeare's work as the expression of a single mind and temperament.

Despite the fragmentary nature of Coleridge's critical work, his was the greatest mind among his contemporaries. In poetry, he influenced the supernaturalism of Scott and Keats. In criticism, his distinction between the reason (an inward spiritual vision), and the understanding (the criterion of the senses), proved of immense value to the theologians of the age, and both the High and Broad Church movements may claim him as their godfather. Equally valuable was his contention that poetry is opposed not to truth but to science; its aim was not to establish truth, but communicate pleasure. Poetry presented us with the concrete symbol; science tried to analyse and abstract the laws embodied.

Apart from the critical genius of these writers, each of them in his own way gave a fresh charm to the art of the Essay. The lovable personality of *Elia* found an exquisite medium in those discursive confidences that saw light in *The London Magazine.* No one could gossip in print more delightfully than he, nor more casually and whimsically convey so much good sense and imaginative sensibility. He is the fantastic philosopher of the commonplace experiences of life: the prince of guides to the byways of thought and feeling.

Thomas de Quincey.—De Quincey's genius as an essayist lay not in any intimate charm of manner but in an astonishing versatility of interests. He was a voluminous writer, from whose work the fine ore must be sifted with care. There are three distinctive notes insistent in his essays—the fantastic, the analytical,

the dramatic. Perhaps the fantastic note is the most individual and is best illustrated in his *Confessions of an Opium Eater* (1821). The analytical note marks his critical essays on *Style* and *Rhetoric ;* the dramatic blending with the fantastic may be found in his "impassioned prose"—a kind of prose poetry intermittently effective—*e.g. A Vision of Sudden Death;* the dramatic note is at its best in that grim and breathless narrative *A Note on the Williams Murders.*

William Hazlitt.—William Hazlitt started life as an itinerant young portrait-painter, with a taste for philosophy. He soon gave up the brush—he never gave up painting—and his brilliant audacities in prose have survived his experiments in pigment.

There is something of Rousseau's sentimental garrulousness about Hazlitt, and this increases the human interest of his writings. We may dissent from his conclusions, or take exception to certain moods, but he never bores us.

He was the reverse of a sociable man, rarely showing his qualities of mind to any but one or two chosen souls. "One of the pleasantest things in life," he says, "is going on a journey, but I like to go by myself. I cannot see the wit of walking and talking at the same time."

Hazlitt is the Byron of prose. There is the same immense vitality in the *Table Talk* (1821) and *Spirit of the Age* (1825), the same changeableness of mood, the same salt of humour, and something of the same strange mixture of idealist and cynical man of the world, as we see in *Beppo* and *Don Juan.*

Charles Lamb, with his unerring insight, never failed to see the finer side of Hazlitt. He declared that Hazlitt in a natural and healthy state was the finest and wisest of spirits breathing.

Leigh Hunt.—On a distinctly humbler level is Leigh Hunt, the friend of Shelley and Keats. He took a vigorous part in the politics of his time, but is better

remembered for his agreeable verse, inspired by Italian models, which served to stimulate Shelley's *Julian and Maddalo,* and Keats's *Lamia*—for instance, *The Story of Rimini* (1816). He had a lively humour, less delicate than Lamb's, but akin to it in whimsical charm, which gives a pleasant quality to his essay work.

The Development of Journalism. — The intense interest in political and social events at the time of the French Revolution found active and instant expression in the great English Journals which came into existence at this time. *The Times, The Morning Chronicle,* and *The Morning Post* had started before the close of the eighteenth century ; and these were followed during the early years of the new era by the foundation of four famous critical Reviews : *The Edinburgh, The Quarterly, Fraser's,* and *Blackwood's Magazines.* Some of the greatest men of letters of the day wrote for these ; and despite the pontifical character of the big Reviews, and their political bias, productive at times of notoriously unfair sledge-hammer criticism, it would be unjust to lose sight of the critical value of a good deal of their work. Among the most prominent writers are such men as Francis Jeffrey, Sydney Smith, Lord Brougham, Professor Wilson, John Lockhart ; while Coleridge, Hazlitt, Southey, Carlyle, and Macaulay did admirable work for them.

Lighter in kind and more literary in interest were such papers as *The London Magazine* (for which Lamb and De Quincey wrote), and Leigh Hunt's *Examiner.* Later in the century came *The Westminster Review,* largely connected with the work of John Stuart Mill.

CHAPTER VI

The Victorian Era (*c.* 1832–1900)

Introduction.—Two strongly marked characteristics affect Victorian life and thought: the growth of the democratic spirit, and the rapid development of scientific ideas.

In the poetry of the time the democratic spirit is reflected in Hood's *Song of the Shirt*, Elizabeth Barrett Browning's *Cry of the Children*, Tennyson's *Locksley Hall*, and the socialistic songs of Charles Kingsley and William Morris; while in the fiction of the age, many of the story-tellers assume the mantle of the Reformer. Social reconstruction is written in big letters right across the voluminous work of Dickens; Mrs. Gaskell, Charlotte Brontë, and "Mark Rutherford" deal with the industrial unrest of the time; Charles Reade tilts furiously against various social abuses; Kingsley preaches the gospel of sanitation; Disraeli paints the political democracy; and Walter Besant directs attention to East London social conditions with his *All Sorts and Conditions of Men.*

The geological discoveries of Sir Charles Lyell, the biological investigations of Robert Chambers, prepared the way for Charles Darwin's *Origin of Species*, for Alfred Russel Wallace, Thomas Huxley, and the philosophic generalizations of Herbert Spencer; all these intellectual streams of thought flowed over into the literature of the age, and profoundly influenced it.

Tennyson treats Nature as an imaginative man of

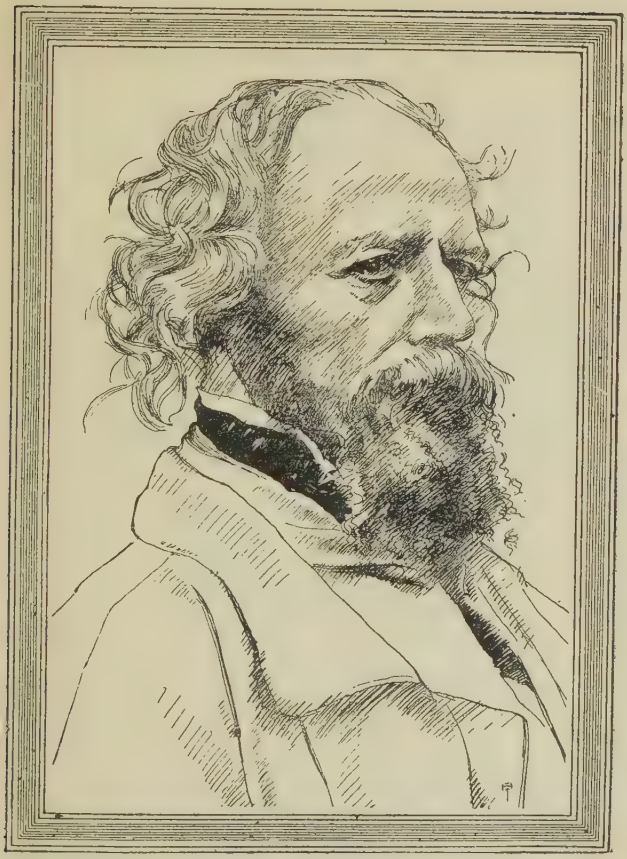
science; Robert Browning is often more like an analytical chemist than an artist; Matthew Arnold and Arthur Hugh Clough are largely occupied with the discrepancies between scientific discovery and religious faith; and although the Pre-Raphaelite School rise in protest against this intellectual invasion of the world of poesy, not even they can quite escape its influence. Among the novelists of the age to voice the scientific spirit, the names of George Eliot, George Meredith, and Thomas Hardy readily occur.

Finally, in comparing the critical prose of the romantic movement with Victorian prose, we may see how the old-world flavour of Lamb is exchanged for the latter-day political strictures of Carlyle. The fantasies of De Quincey give place to the ironic, social commentary of Arnold, and in place of the literary heresies of Hazlitt we get the economic heresies of Ruskin and Morris.

I. POETRY

Tennyson.—There is no poet who more completely reflects in his verse the questions that were agitating the minds of the average Englishman in Victorian times than Alfred Tennyson. When he began to write the great romantic poets had finished their work, and overshadowed by their rich legacy of song, his early work sounds no very authentic note. It is pretty album verse, to which the eighteenth century phrase *elegant* seems applicable. But in the volume of 1842, the superficial prettiness of the early verse is replaced by something much stronger and finer. Such a poem as *Morte d'Arthur* exhibits those qualities of lucidity, melody, and dignity which inform the poet's best work.

In Memoriam is, in many ways, Tennyson's most noble achievement. There is a greater lyric passion and splendour in its successor, *Maud;* but it combines the gracious dignity of *Morte d'Arthur* with the



ALFRED, LORD TENNYSON

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clarity and precision of his narrative poems and the rhythmic music of his *Idylls*. As a poetic statement of the religious doubts of the time, it obtained a powerful hold over Tennyson's generation. To us to-day, to whom Darwin is not the last word in thought, the exquisite artistry of the poem appeals the more intimately. Tennyson is the poet of average humanity, and in his verse we find the ordinary concerns of life touched by him just as they affect the average man and woman. With a considerable measure of Wordsworth's naked power of expression and homeliness of subject-matter, he brings to his pictures of English life a tenderness and caressing grace all his own. His love of ornament leads him into tawdriness at times, just as Wordsworth's love of simplicity makes him trivial. But on his own ground, in dealing with the broad features of our national life—with its passion for domesticity, deep-rooted reverence for the past, and frank insular enthusiasm, he is unexcelled. In his dramatic experiments, in his modern sentimental treatment of the Arthurian Legend, he is not at his best. The beauty of the Arthurian Legend, so strongly and poignantly treated by Morris, is not well exhibited by being turned into a latter-day "Morality"; and although he showed genuine power of presenting character in monologue in his dialect poems, both he and Browning lacked that essential of good drama—the power of presenting character in action. But as a word-painter of typical English scenery, as the exponent of the simple emotions of everyday life, he has no equal. All these matters are portrayed with extraordinary delicacy and crystalline clearness. With his deliberate abstention from the violent and unusual, it required great art to avoid bathos. On the whole, Tennyson emerges triumphant from the ordeal. For other poets, the Alpine wonders and the raptures of life; in Tennyson's company we are beside the green pastures and still waters.

ROBERT BROWNING
AS A YOUNG MAN

From a pen-drawing by
E. Heber Thompson

Tennyson and Browning as Artists.—As an artist Tennyson's place is secure; and his friend ROBERT BROWNING, to whom the thing said was always of more importance than the way of saying it, must take a secondary place. But as a vitalizing force in the literature of his age, Browning is just as certainly his superior.

Their Literary Methods.—In literary method they have nothing in common. Tennyson is descriptive and panoramic; Browning impressionistic and dramatic. He plunges into the middle of his topic at once—

> "Stop—let me have the truth of that."
>
> "What's become of Waring . . . . ?"
>
> "It is a lie—their Priest, their Pope!"

Where Tennyson is deliberate, measured, eclectic, Browning is impulsive, passionate, omnivorous. He is as interested as Tennyson or Arnold in the conflict between Science and Religion, though unlike them he is stimulated, not depressed by it.

"He has plenty of music in him," said Tennyson of his friend, "but he can't get it out." It was more a case of *wouldn't* than *couldn't*. Browning was a real poet and a great poet. Only a great poet could have given us *Pippa Passes* and *The Ring and the Book*. But he was a great poet by fits and starts; for so interested is he in men and things, that he will throw aside the artist's robe in order to get on more intimate terms with his reader. If he can talk to us in terms of rhythmic beauty, well and good; if not, so much the worse for rhythmic beauty! Yet none could be more musical than he when the mood took him. A large part of Browning's work consists of little novels in verse, but the Browning that will survive is Browning the Singer.

For if often harsh and unmusical, and deliberately obscure, not through vagueness of thought but be-

cause he has no regard for the slower-witted reader, he is never negligible. Like Whitman his personality is intensely vital, and of nearly all his writings can one say, "This is no book; who touches this touches a man."

Elizabeth Barrett Browning.—His wife, Elizabeth Barrett Browning, apart from the romantic rôle she played in her husband's life, chiefly interests us as doing for modern poetry what Charlotte Brontë did for fiction. She was not a great artist, nor an acute thinker, but she had the power of expressing with fine sensibility, passion, and force the woman's point of view. From this standpoint she touches the social problems of her time in *Aurora Leigh*, while her *Sonnets from the Portuguese* (1845) are the finest poems we have of the self-expressed love of a wife and mother. These are her most remarkable contributions to poetry, and may take their place with Rossetti's *House of Life*.

Arnold and Clough.—The sceptical unrest of the mid-century is forcibly mirrored in Clough's unequal verses, and more fastidiously and exquisitely expressed in the classic art of Arnold. If not among our greatest poets, Matthew Arnold was certainly great within somewhat narrow limits. Wistful sweetness rather than strength, delicate irony rather than lyric passion, informs his verse. This suavity is never more happily expressed than in the *Scholar Gipsy* and *Thyrsis*, where Oxford and the Thames are his inspiration. For irony, what better example than the *Obermann* poems? This of the East:

> "She let the legions thunder past,
> And plunged in thought again."

Or for a line of poignant regret inimitably phrased:

> "The unplumbed, salt, estranging sea."

Dover Beach, one of his most characteristic poems, reflects the melancholy of a troubled but brave spirit. In short, he is a fine artist, more limited in his music than Tennyson, less virile and original than Browning, but unexcelled in depicting certain wistful moods of human experience.

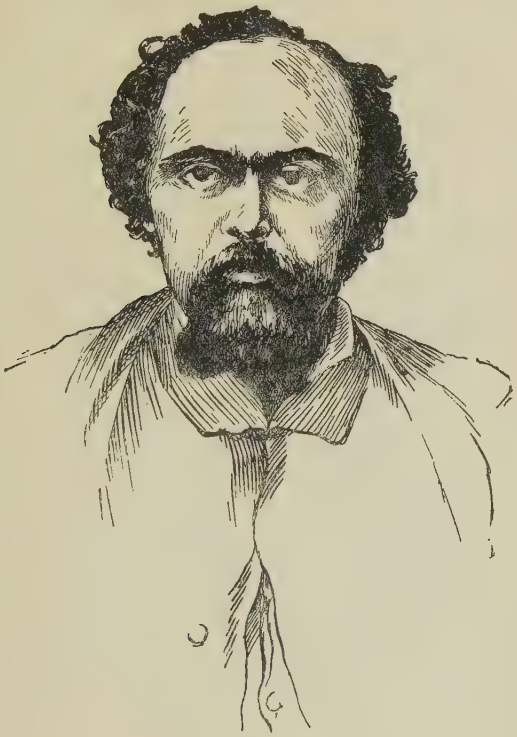
Poetry and the Pre-Raphaelite Movement.—In its narrower aspects this was an Art movement that tried to restore to modern painting something of that individuality and sincerity which characterized the painters before Raphael—*e.g.* Giotto, Bellini, and Fra Angelico. It originated with a book of engravings which Holman Hunt and Millais saw at Rossetti's house, of certain Italian frescoes. And the Brotherhood embodied a protest against the mechanical and superficial art of the day.

In its broader aspects pre-Raphaelitism was a plea for the imaginative life, a protest against the intellectualism which had crept into the poetry of the age, and had threatened its emotional and artistic vitality.

In a sense, therefore, it was a return to the earlier romanticism, and mediæval enthusiasm plays a considerable share in its manifestations.

In its broader aspects, moreover, it is related to the Tractarian Movement, which also emphasized the imaginative as opposed to the intellectual life, and was as impatient with modern scientific thought as the pre-Raphaelites themselves. Only whereas the pre-Raphaelite said : Science has nothing to do with art—it is irrelevant ; the Tractarian said : Science has nothing to do with religion—it is wrong. To Newman and Keble the scientific " time-spirit " was a moral curse ; to Rossetti and Morris merely a nuisance. Religious art bulks largely in their work, but it is the æsthetics, not the dialectics of Christianity that concern them. Rossetti's poetry therefore denotes a break in the poetic traditions of the age.

Dante Gabriel Rossetti.—In two of his poems,



D. G. ROSSETTI

Jenny and *The Burden of Nineveh*, he touches certain aspects of modern life; but with this exception his poetry, like that of Keats, is a world apart—a world of mystic beauty and romance.

It must always be remembered that Rossetti was half Italian in temperament, and although his fervent love poetry may repel many by its sensuous frankness, it never justified Robert Buchanan's bitter attack. For it is sensuous, not sensual. To the Italian mind the human body is as sacred as the soul, and the senses are sacramental emblems of the spirit. Italian love poetry, therefore, however fevered and voluptuous it may be, is never gross or base; since it does not extol the senses at the expense of the soul, but glorifies the soul through the senses.

Christina Rossetti and other Woman Poets.—The devout faith of Christina Rossetti removes her from the pagan romanticism of her brother and William Morris. With less variety and depth of passion than Elizabeth Barrett Browning, she is a greater artist. Her work lacks the fundamental brain power of her brother, but has on the whole greater clarity. In two only of Dante Gabriel Rossetti's poems, *The Blessed Damozel* and *My Sister's Sleep*, does he achieve the lucent simplicity of his sister; and in her charming *Goblin Market* she touches a note of fantasy almost Shakespearean in its convincing magic. Akin to her in fine and delicate craftsmanship is Alice Meynell, and on a lower artistic plane are the once popular Jean Ingelow and the scholarly Augusta Webster.

The mystic aspects of mediævalism appealed to Rossetti much as they appealed to Coleridge. And if Coleridge and Rossetti approximate in this, so do Scott and William Morris, in preferring the broader and more spectacular side of the life of the Middle Ages.

William Morris.—William Morris was in reality a

WILLIAM MORRIS

From a pen-drawing by
E. Heber Thompson

great artist who wrote verse as one of many media for expressing his innate sense of beauty, since it was certainly a moot point at times whether the outcome of Morris's inspiration would be a poem or a wall-paper. His well-known dictum, that a man who was unable to turn from an epic to a tapestry had better leave both alone, is finely characteristic. He could do either so well that he often merged the one into the other. He wove his epic with the craftsman's cunning, and wrote his stories in coloured silks. His best work in verse reads like happy improvisations, while his unerring instinct for beauty and his mastery of metrical form kept him free from the pitfalls of the fluent rhymester. Even more than Scott, Morris loved the Middle Ages for their human elements ; the democratic note is always insistent, and a fundamental sympathy with " simple folk not troubled with the intricacies of life," unites Morris the Poet with Morris the Social Reformer. There is an ease, a naturalness in his narrative work, and in his power to tell a good story in verse, lucidly and simply, he has no equal save Chaucer.

The common criticism of Morris's poetry, that there are no mountain peaks in it, is true enough, but, like all negative criticism, misses the peculiar beauty of his work. He flies low, purposely, designedly. In keeping close to the earth, as he does in his delightful re-telling of Mediæval, Greek, and Scandinavian stories in *Jason*, *The Earthly Paradise*, *Sigurd*, and *Love is Enough*, Morris provides us with many compensations for the lack of rhythmic felicities in his work ; none more welcome than the fresh sweetness and level excellence of his work as a whole.

There is one poetic quality in which Rossetti and Morris are deficient—lyric power. That quality is supplied by the youngest of the pre-Raphaelite Poets—Algernon Charles Swinburne. He was indeed, as Tennyson happily said, " a reed through

which all things blow into music." The appeal of the others had been chiefly to the eye; their art was essentially pictorial. Swinburne, like Shelley, appeals chiefly to the ear. Indeed his music is grander than Shelley's. Shelley's melodies are sweet and simple: Swinburne's complex orchestral effects. *Atalanta in Calydon* took the Victorian world by storm; in its superb sweeping power it struck an entirely fresh note in the poetry of the time. The publication of *Poems and Ballads*, with its frank eroticism, two years later, checked the chorus of praise. But these were merely literary "wild oats" sown by the youthful poet, and in rhythmic power this book is even greater than its predecessor. The second volume of *Poems and Ballads* finally confirmed the great lyrical reputation of Swinburne. His work touches every key of song from verses light and enchanting as fairy music, such as:

"If love were what the rose is,
And I were like the leaf,
Our lives would grow together,
In sad or singing weather,
Blown fields or flowerful closes,
Green pleasures or grey grief,
If love were what the rose is
And I were like the leaf";

to the sombre splendour of—

"So long I endure; no longer; and laugh not again, neither weep—
For there is no God found stronger than death; and death is a sleep."

Swinburne's is the last word of the romantic reaction. It is pre-Raphaelitism in its most exultant and defiant mood, and with it the era of great Victorian poetry comes to a close.

Of the lesser constellations of the age it is impossible to speak save in the briefest terms. Thomas Hood, of whose serious work mention has been made, achieved his reputation as a versifier of ingenious comic invention, exhibiting, moreover, a vein of delicate fancy in *The Plea of the Midsummer Fairies*, and a graphic power in his grim *Dream of Eugene Aram;* while Charles Kingsley proved himself a lyric poet of the people, who brought passion and fine sensibility into such songs as *The Three Fishers* and *The Sands o' Dee.* James Thomson's *City of Dreadful Night* shows the influence of the sceptical tendencies of the day upon a sensitive and morbid mind.

Humour and Satire.—The growth of a more critical attitude towards current political and social conventions is responsible for a cluster of light humorous versifiers and satirists, among them William Mackworth Praed, who is a nineteenth-century Prior in his skilful treatment of *vers de société*, and Richard Harris Barham, with his once popular *Ingoldsby Legends;* whilst C. S. Calverley, J. K. Stephen, continue with fine scholarly power the art of parody, happily inaugurated by James and Horace Smith in the famous *Rejected Addresses* so admired by one of its victims, Byron. To-day the light brigade of verse has become a regiment: including such accomplished swordsmen as Andrew Lang, Edmund Gosse, Owen Seaman, and A. A. Milne.

A little apart from these, because of his richer fantasy and more whimsical charm, is Lewis Carroll (Charles Lutwidge Dodgson), whose unrivalled medleys, *Alice in Wonderland* and *Through the Looking-Glass*, and that delicious extravaganza, *The Hunting of the Snark*, added at once to the gaiety of the schoolroom and the library. In logical absurdities and topsy-turvy humour he has no peer save W. S. Gilbert. Gilbert is at his best in the *Bab Ballads* (written during the sixties), where many of the ideas afterwards

elaborated into the Gilbert and Sullivan operas first saw the light. He is a better wit than humorist—his humour lacks kindliness—and amazingly adept at metrical acrobatics. As a rule his verse is distinguished by its hard polished surface, but occasionally, as in *Is Life a Boon?* he showed a mellower poetic gift.

Before leaving the lighter side of Victorian letters, tribute must be paid to EDWARD LEAR, whose nonsense verses testify triumphantly that sometimes there is *no* step between the sublime and the ridiculous; an original comic force for whose fantastic inspiration one is so grateful that Ruskin's agreeable extravagance seems the fittest compliment, "I should place him first of my hundred authors."

Philosophic Verse.—The intellectual life and philosophic preoccupations of the mid-century find cultured expression in Sir Henry Taylor; the *Festus* of Philip James Bailey, and the *Orion* of Richard Hengist Horne. Greater than either in thought is GEORGE MEREDITH, whose lyrical vein found delightful expression in *Love in a Valley* and *Juggling Jerry;* although in the bulk of his poems, as with Browning, it is the matter rather than the manner that counts. In other words, he thinks rather than sings in verse.

Two poets with a special vogue of their own, are EDWARD FITZGERALD and COVENTRY PATMORE. Fitzgerald voices, with great artistic beauty and the light touch of a Horace, the sceptical thought of his day in his famous translation of *The Rubaiyát of Omar Khayyám*, which Browning essayed to answer in *Rabbi Ben Ezra;* while Patmore, standing apart both from the intellectual movement and the pre-Raphaelites, developed a gift of verse more akin to Wordsworth's than to that of any other poet, in its simple, dignified treatment of homely themes.

2. FICTION

The extraordinary development of fiction in the eighteenth century seemed to have reached its zenith in Scott, who combined in his work the qualities of the old time romance and the realistic novel of Fielding. For a brief space the imaginative genius of the age flowed in the channels of verse. But the lull was brief. The conditions of modern life clamoured for their story-tellers, and the Victorian novel came into existence and showed what unexplored potentialities had been left undeveloped. The brilliant succession of novelists that started with Charles Dickens and closed with Thomas Hardy, left scarcely any aspect of modern existence untouched.

Middle-class ideals had found expression in eighteenth-century fiction, but meanwhile a vast class was growing up that found no articulate expression in imaginative literature. Wordsworth and Crabbe had dealt with the lives of the country poor, and Cobbett had voiced their grievances in his vigorous prose. But the London poor had no spokesman until Dickens came upon the scene. From the very start he held a brief for the humbler classes of the community, and there were few phases of struggling city life which he did not paint, very often with the pigments of personal experience. To some he is merely a popular writer of rich comic invention ; to others an earnest social reformer. But neither of these presuppositions is sufficient to account for his persistent fame and popularity.

Charles Dickens.—He appealed, and still appeals, primarily because he deals with the large simplicities of life. He is the great story-teller of the common lives of common people ; great, because, though dealing continually with little worries, little pleasures, little hardships, he made the dullest of lives in the

CHARLES DICKENS
AS A YOUNG MAN

From a pen-drawing by
E. Heber Thompson

drabbest of streets as enchanting as a fairy tale. In his hands the squalor of Lant Street becomes a fearful joy, and we would not exchange his impecunious Bohemians for all the heroes of mythology. No one shows better than he that a basic affinity with suffering lies at the root of the richest laughter. From *Pickwick* to *David Copperfield* Dickens followed, in the form of his stories, the loose picaresque methods of the elder novelists. In the manner of his satire also he owed something both to Fielding and Smollett. But his literary debts are few and slight, and he was indebted chiefly to his own genius, and to those astounding powers of observation which kept in check (sometimes with difficulty) his fantastic imagination. After *David Copperfield*, and largely through the influence of his friend Wilkie Collins, a master in the art of construction, his stories are more closely riveted together. It is questionable, however, whether the freer latitude of his earlier books did not afford more fertile scope for his splendid discursiveness. After all, he was rarely more enjoyable than when absolutely irrelevant. Who would not exchange the elaborate plot of *Bleak House* for another Mrs. Nickleby, or the mystery behind *Edwin Drood* for the profounder mystery of Mr. Micawber's colonial experiences? But if flagging in humorous invention and easy exuberance, the later books are fully as rich in observation of London types and London sights; whilst in *Great Expectations* is provided a worthy companion picture to *David Copperfield*. It is drawn on a smaller scale and is set in a more subdued key. But he never did anything better in characterization than the wholly delightful Joe Gargery and the egregious Pumblechook.

Thackeray. — His friend and contemporary, William Makepeace Thackeray, has this in common with him, that he too approaches the town life of his day from the standpoint of the humorist; there the

CHARLOTTE BRONTË

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comparison ends. As a painter of social life he is the complement, not the rival, of Dickens. Dickens deals largely with the lower middle and poorer classes of the community; Thackeray with the middle and "upper" classes. Dickens was frankly a class-man, and wrote as one who had risen from the people. He had neither the same opportunity, nor indeed the wish, to learn the ways of the richer and more exclusive circles of society. Thackeray loved good society—not from any snobbishness, but because an atmosphere of comfort and culture suited his temperament; and he is at his best in dealing with that section of society. He did for the aristocrat and club-man what Dickens did for the street vagrant and small shopkeeper—gave them a place in the pages of literature.

Thackeray's intellectual sympathies were with the late eighteenth century rather than with his own day; and his fine historical novel, *Esmond*, is less a literary experiment than a congenial expression of temperament. The title of his most popular work, *Vanity Fair*, symbolizes his own attitude towards Victorian society; intensely sensitive, he often hides his real feelings, as sensitive men do, under an appearance of cynicism, but he was no cynic at heart. He is a powerful social satirist, along well-defined lines, and an accomplished though scarcely catholic literary critic. But his work as a whole, though sometimes superior in craftsmanship, lacks the splendid breadth and large humanity of Dickens.

Charlotte Brontë.—While Dickens and Thackeray were vitalizing town life, Charlotte Brontë in her lonely Yorkshire home was finding literary outlet for the aspirations and longings of sensitive insurgent womanhood. How familiar the phrase to-day! How unfamiliar in the days when *Jane Eyre* first took the public by storm! Reserved and shy by nature, she found no means of expressing herself except with pen

in hand. Then she bares her inmost thoughts and feelings. A greater contrast with the other literary daughter of a clergyman in the south it would be hard to imagine. To Jane Austen life is a comedy; it is a tragedy to Charlotte Brontë. Jane Austen's pictures are delicate water-colour miniatures; Charlotte Brontë's are oil paintings of the school of Rembrandt. Jane is severely objective in her art, detaching herself from her subject-matter. Charlotte is passionately subjective and confidential; so confidential that the reader sometimes feels as if he had overheard things not meant for utterance, but somehow forced from the writer under great stress of emotion. As a literary artist Charlotte Brontë excels in stormy effects, whether in portraying emotional states of mind, which she renders with wonderful sincerity and subtlety, or in depicting phases of nature. What could be happier in its fine observation than the description of the Yorkshire moors—"washed from the world" in "whitening sheets of rain."

Emily Brontë.—A more remarkable personality is her sister, Emily Brontë, in whom the wildness and loneliness of the Yorkshire moors seem to become personified. Her book, *Wuthering Heights*, in sheer force of imagination is greater than anything of Charlotte's, and her verse is finer; but there is greater variety in Charlotte's work, and a more plastic art.

The Brontës' great biographer, Mrs. Gaskell, is less individual and intimate in her stories, dealing more generally with the broad social aspects of contemporary life. Especially good are her studies of life in the industrial North—notably *Mary Barton*. Her versatility is shown in such a quaint picture as *Cranford*, which reproduces the old-world charm of Miss Mitford's *Our Village*, without being in the least sense an imitation.

George Eliot.—George Eliot (Mary Ann Evans),

like Tennyson, is suffering from the swing of the pendulum. Once regarded as one of our greatest novelists, her books are scarcely read at all by the present generation. And yet she is an important historic figure in the development of the English novel, with a body of work of solid lasting value to her credit.

She was the first novelist to lay the stress wholly upon character rather than on incident.

Deeply touched by the scientific influence of the age, especially by Spencer and Comte, she approached her work in quite different spirit than the Brontës. She never flung an emotional problem at her readers, but traced its source with subtlety, made clear to you its various confluences. She excelled in the spiritual geography of hopes, fears, and loves. Her intimate knowledge of English country life is used freely and with rich effect in her best work—in *Adam Bede*, *The Mill on the Floss*, *Silas Marner*, and *Middlemarch*. She challenges comparison here with Jane Austen, yet how different their method ! Jane Austen is photographic in her fidelity, but an observer always, never a critic. One always feels the presence of the critic and the thinker in George Eliot's work. The difference will be the more readily apprehended if we compare the speeches of Miss Bates in *Emma* with those of Aunt Pullet in *The Mill on the Floss*. We can feel her amused tolerance with the foibles of her characters, hear at times her *sotto voce* comments. For tolerant she is always ; there is no novelist with a more gracious breadth of sympathy than she ; while her fine sense of humour gives delightful point and freshness to her provincial settings. She served no apprenticeship to fiction ; her novels show very little intellectual or artistic development. *Janet's Repentance*, in her first volume, has the freshness and insight of her best work—on a limited scale. Of all her novels, *Adam Bede* has proved the most popular ; but for tenderness and idyllic charm it must give

GEORGE ELIOT

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E. Heber Thompson

place to *Silas Marner*, and for power of characterization to *Middlemarch*. *Daniel Deronda* has proved a stumbling-block to many readers, and here undoubtedly the wheels of her chariot drive heavily. But a tale that contains the powerfully handled episode of Grandcourt and Gwendolen Harleth is certainly not negligible.

George Meredith.—While the literary world was vigorously applauding *Adam Bede*, *The Ordeal of Richard Feverel*, published in the same year, was passed by with scarcely any comment. George Eliot, whose acute critical faculty proved so valuable an asset to the *Westminster Review*, had been the first to extend generous recognition to the humour and imaginative charm of *The Shaving of Shagpat;* but Meredith, like Browning, was the cult of a few before he became the fashion of the many. His limited vogue is not surprising, for, despite his keen intellect and ardent imagination, his style presents often disconcerting difficulties to the average reader.

His books are best read in the light of his brilliantly suggestive *Essay on the Comic Spirit*. What makes his satire so wholesome is the fact that behind it all there is a warm poetic imagination. Severe on all superficialities of thought and feeling, he never mocks at true romance. There is one noble sentence of his that strikes the keynote of all his psychology: "You may estimate your capacity for comic perception by being able to detect the ridicule of them you love without loving them less." And so far as his philosophy of life can be put into a phrase, it is here: "We do not get to any heaven by renouncing the mother we sprang from; and when there is an eternal secret for us, it is best to believe that Earth knows, to keep near her even in our utmost aspiration."

Contemporary with George Eliot and the early years of Meredith is Anthony Trollope, a writer of immense popularity in his time. Without the

genius of the great Victorians, he showed himself to be a craftsman of great ability, and in the Barsetshire novels he has given us a picture of English provincial life in a cathedral town, remarkable for shrewd observation of character and a lively if not very subtle humour. One illustrious character at least he added to the gallery of the immortals of fiction, the awe-inspiring Mrs. Proudie.

The last great Victorian novelist, however, is Mr. THOMAS HARDY, who in his later years has returned to verse writing.

Deriving to some extent from George Eliot, and from the work of the French Realistic school, his fiction bears the distinctive impress of an original and highly sensitive mind. Lacking the intellectual vigour and plasticity of Meredith, he is an incomparably better story-teller, with a spacious, deliberate manner, and a rare insight into simple, uncultured, elemental natures. He has little interest in the jostling crowds of the city which attracted Dickens and Thackeray, or for the complexities of man as a civilized animal, which fascinated Meredith. To depict the primal things of life; to dally with old-world customs; to paint men and women as the inevitable outcome of a certain environment, that was the aim of Hardy. He is a dweller in Arcadia, but not the Arcadia of the sentimental novelists. Oscar Wilde observed caustically of a certain popular novelist that he was always frightening "the evening sky into violent chromo-lithographic effects." There is nothing of the chromo-lithograph in Hardy's scenic descriptions. They have more than a touch of Wordsworth's austere and integrating power. His extreme sensitiveness to the "still sad music of humanity" imparts a gloom to some of his later novels—notably, *Tess* and *Jude the Obscure;* but his earlier novels, *Under the Greenwood Tree, Far from the Madding Crowd, The Trumpet Major,* are

lightened by a delightful humour. His strength as a novelist lies in his Nature "pieces" and in his rustic scenes. Without ever overdoing his dialect, he preserves all the savour of the vernacular, and in the talk conveys a vital illumination to the readers of the speaker's inmost characters. There can be little doubt that he will take his place among our greatest novelists by virtue of the high beauty of his best work, and his consummate power of actualizing subtle impressions and fleeting moods.

The last characteristic finds an exponent of quite another temperament in HENRY JAMES; but Mr. James expends his subtle psychology chiefly upon the cultured classes. Two other psychological novelists of distinction are John Oliver Hobbes (Mrs. Craigie) and Mrs. Humphry Ward. The first has a Gallic wit and sense of style denied to her contemporary; but Mrs. Ward's work has more solid qualities, and she has given us some thoughtful and vigorous pictures of modern English life and thought.

The realistic school, that had so remarkable a vogue in France, headed by Zola, has found no very secure place in English literature, though it has influenced some of our story-tellers. Mr. George Moore is the ablest of the English "realists," and his *Mummer's Wife* and *Esther Waters* are among the best of their kind.

Less well known is Mr. Leonard Merrick, whose delicate, unobtrusive craftsmanship and clear insight into certain types of character have never received adequate appreciation.

Turning now from the character novel to the story of incident, we find ourselves in the midst of a multitude of writers from whom it is possible only to select a few representative names. Incident pure and simple such as we find in earlier fiction, like the military stories of Charles Lever and the naval yarns of Marryat, are rare in Victorian times. Even born

romancers like Charles Kingsley are drawn for a while into the social vortex of the hour. Agricultural problems are set forth in *Yeast;* industrial defects in *Alton Locke.* But his picturesque pen finds greater artistic scope in the patriotic romance of *Westward Ho,* in the tale of the break-up of the Roman Empire, *Hypatia,* and in the invigorating fantasy for children, *The Water Babies.* Similar in his gifts, and in the opinion of many, a better story-teller, was his brother Henry Kingsley, whose *Ravenshoe* retains its popularity even to-day.

With a large measure of Charles Kingsley's lively imagination, CHARLES READE has something also of his inequality as an artist. Starting as a writer of plays, he rarely forgot the limelight when he turned to fiction; but he had, at his best, in common with his greater contemporary Dickens, dramatic power and intensity of a high order. This it is which makes the reader forget at times the inordinate length of *The Cloister and the Hearth*—an historical romance of splendid episodic force—and gives colour and interest to *It's Never too Late to Mend, Foul Play,* and *Hard Cash,* where the story-teller exhibits in turn prison abuses, convict life in Australia, and the treatment of the insane. With many of the gifts of the romancer Reade combined enormous industry in getting up his case, and an indomitable humanitarian zeal. His friend WILKIE COLLINS, in his social sympathies resembled Reade, but his abilities as a writer ran in directions apart from the novel with a purpose. Of all Victorian novelists he is perhaps the most neglected to-day, yet he is, as a weaver of complicated plots, unequalled among English writers. He had what his French rival, Gaboriau, mostly lacked, a real sense of character. In his best books, *The Woman in White, After Dark, The Moonstone, Armadale,* and *No Name,* he shows imaginative power of a high order.

Another type of novelist who romanticized the less

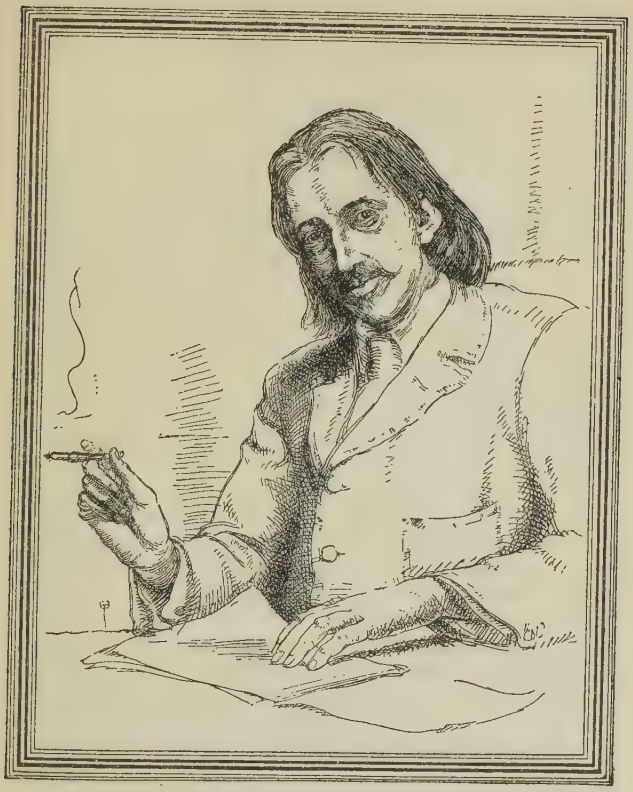
familiar actualities of ordinary life, is illustrated by GEORGE BORROW. His knowledge of gypsy life, which his peculiar temperament gave him unusual opportunities of studying, imparts a distinctive flavour to his attractive vagrant stories, *Lavengro*, *The Romany Rye*, and *The Bible in Spain*. As agent for the Bible Society he had opportunities for travel which afforded him rich material for his tales. These are, in the main, imaginative autobiographies.

Honest, straightforward romancers with a good story to tell were William Black and Sir Walter Besant, while on a higher imaginative plane is R. D. Blackmore; and the name of J. H. Shorthouse is associated with one striking historical novel, *John Inglesant*.

Among the crowd of story-tellers who kept, like Wilkie Collins, more to everyday life with judicious seasoning of melodrama, the familiar names of Miss Braddon and Mrs. Henry Wood detach themselves readily. Turgid and artificial in her pictures of "high life," but with real though undisciplined imagination, is the prolific and once widely read "Ouida."

In GEORGE MACDONALD we have a healthy Scottish novelist of talent, and a Gaelic romancer with a touch of genius, whose fantasies for children have never been rivalled save by the incomparable Hans Andersen. *At the Back of the North Wind*, *The Princess and the Goblin*, and *Phantastes*, are among the very best of their kind. Mrs. Oliphant, a prolific and versatile writer, and contributor to *Blackwood's Magazine*, touched at times a high level of excellence—notably in *The Beleaguered City*.

Two names claiming more special attention are ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON, whose piquant blend of humour and imaginative exuberance finds characteristic expression in *The New Arabian Nights;* and WILLIAM MORRIS, who fashioned his Utopian dreams from the best elements of mediævalism. Both Stevenson and Morris were stylists of a high order who did



ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON

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much for the beautifying of English prose. Morris, however, deliberately eshewed humour in his romances, while Stevenson achieves some of his most characteristic effects by means of it. There is a good deal of the eternal child in both Stevenson and Morris. Stevenson approached romance much in the mood of the "young man with the cream tarts"; while the gusto and high spirits of *Treasure Island* are readily communicated to the reader. Morris's frank delight in the healthy actualities and the wistful idealism of youth untouched by the preoccupation of the civilized man is one of the chief charms of such fascinating literature as *The Dream of John Ball* and *The Wood beyond the World*. His frank, pagan love of the earth and its beauty finds a counterpart in the rhythmic prose of RICHARD JEFFERIES, whose *Life of the Fields*, and pictures of country sights and sounds in Southern England, are in literary descent from Gilbert White's *Selborne*, and claim imaginative affinity with Thoreau's *Walden*.

Morris's romances, like his poetry, are something apart from the trend of Victorian fiction. Stevenson, however, found successors on the historical side in A. T. Quiller-Couch, Anthony Hope, Stanley Weyman, and John Buchan, to mention a few of the most notable; while Maurice Hewlett certainly derives from him in part.

As a prose-man, W. H. HUDSON (1841–1922) is simpler than Morris, though with much of Morris's charm. Whether speaking of his own youth in South America, or of animal life in England, he has the faculty of getting down to the heart of his subject. And like Antæus of old, he derives fresh strength every time he touches the earth.

3. HISTORY AND CRITICISM

The work of THOMAS CARLYLE belongs only in part to the Victorian Era, but with the exception of *Sartor*

Resartus his most characteristic work was published during that time. *The French Revolution* appeared in 1837, and 1865 saw the intrepid veteran emerging from what Mrs. Carlyle humorously and not unfittingly called " The Valley of the Shadow of Frederic." During the early years of struggle at Ecclefechan he did much to familiarize English readers with German literature. But his first characteristic utterance is *Sartor Resartus*, where his emphatic but negative gospel may be found. It is in essence a tilt against shams of every kind, expressed in the form of an assumed record about Teufelsdröckh and his " philosophy of clothes,"—a notion borrowed from Swift. *The French Revolution* which followed was in itself a revolution in the making of a history. In form only is it a prose history ; in essence it is a poetic rhapsody on the elemental forces that make for social disintegration. The book made his name, though not his fortune. Later came *Heroes and Hero Worship*, from which emerged definitely his admiration of might—wherever he found it, and the tendency to associate might with right, which led him to bestow the aureole, at times, on some sorry saints.

Among Carlyle's miscellaneous and political essays none struck a fresher note than the well-known eulogy of the Middle Ages in *Past and Present*, while his work on Cromwell is the finest piece of effective special pleading for puritanism that we have. As a stylist he reminds us of his propinquity with the romantic movement. It is prose in revolt against eighteenth-century canons ; prose as idiosyncratic as that of Hazlitt and Lamb. Violent and chaotic often, it is amazingly vivid and ardent ; with a grim and savage grandeur at times that takes the reader by the throat.

The humorist in Carlyle must not be overlooked. He is not a genial humorist like Dickens or a whimsical one like Lamb, but a trenchant sardonic one, and this gives a sharp relish to the abundance of luminous

criticism which his writings contain. For all his pæan on brute force, and the harsh impatience which animates many of his social strictures, he had a strain of deep tenderness in his nature, and if "gey ill to live wi'," was a loyal friend, and at bottom a great-hearted man.

History in Carlyle's view was—Biography writ large. The great man made the age. The opposite view was expressed by his contemporary HENRY THOMAS BUCKLE. If Carlyle was too little affected by the scientific ideas of his time, Buckle no doubt generalized too hastily; but for all the exaggeration, his unfinished *History of Civilization* —in which the thesis that environment makes the age, and the great man too—is full of fruitful suggestions. In his power of actualizing history, Carlyle has no mean rival in THOMAS BABINGTON MACAULAY. Gifted with a prodigious memory, scholarly tastes, splendid industry, and great power of mental assimilation, he had at his command a vast array of literary and historical allusions that imparted point and lucidity to his pictures. For he would give to a social vignette all the vividness and reality of a novel, and had the lawyer's power of condensing and clarifying an intricate subject. In this he excels Carlyle, just as he falls below him in deep imaginative power.

Another great prose-man of the period is Carlyle's biographer, JAMES ANTHONY FROUDE. As an historian he has been much criticized for his lack of accuracy. Notwithstanding this admitted defect, he has, quite as fully as Carlyle and Macaulay, the power of making the dry bones of history live. Added to this he has a literary style, less fatiguing than Carlyle's, and with nothing of that hard metallic glitter which often wearies one in Macaulay. His *History of England from the Fall of Wolsey to the Defeat of the Armada* has done more to make Englishmen realize the character-

istics of that age than any other work. Not all his writing was equally good, but his *Bunyan* is excellent, and for cultured thought and grace of style his *Short Studies* must be put in the front rank of his writings. E. A. Freeman, his most hostile critic, did admirable work as a specialist in certain fields of history—*e.g.* The Norman Conquest—but his pugnacity often warped his judgment.

Of greater literary interest is the work of Freeman's pupil, John Richard Green, whose lively and scholarly imagination and picturesque style made of his *Short History of the English People* one of the best introductions to our history in the language.

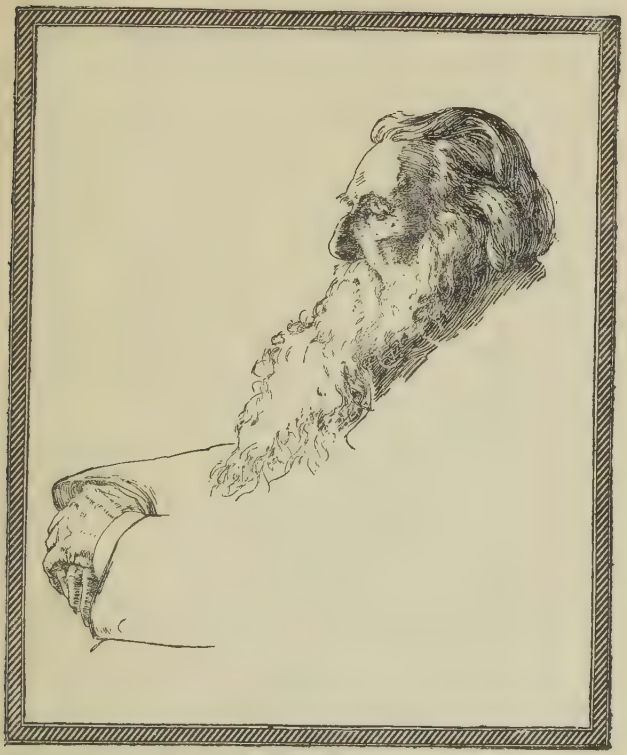
The name of Henry Hallam will always be connected with the first serious attempt to treat history in a more impartial and unprejudiced manner; if not a great writer, he was eminently fair-minded, and the modern school of historians are certainly indebted to him. Among the modern school, including many names of distinction, are W. E. H. Lecky, the scholarly historian of the eighteenth century and of *European Morals;* James Bryce, with his searching picture of *The Holy Roman Empire* and his monumental *American Commonwealth;* S. R. Gardiner, who did in substance for the early Stuarts and Cromwell what Froude did for the Tudors, with greater impartiality of method if with less charm of style; Mandell Creighton; Gairdner, and Bishop Stubbs—learned and well-balanced writers in ecclesiastical and mediæval history; and Sir John Seeley, a most stimulating and suggestive historical critic.

Turning from history to more distinctively critical work, there is MATTHEW ARNOLD, whose *Essays in Criticism* proved highly suggestive, less as actual criticisms of various writers than as a guide to a *method* of appreciation. These should be read in connection with the more valuable *Culture and Anarchy*, embodying Arnold's educational ideas, and indicating

some greatly needed criticism of English ways of thought. Arnold's ideal of culture may be compared and considered advantageously with T. H. HUXLEY'S *Educational Essays*. Fundamentally they are not at variance, but present the problem from the different points of view of the scholar-poet and the cultured man of science. Huxley is one of the few scientists with a vigorous vital style, by means of which he did much to popularize the ideas of Spencer and Darwin, and to apply them to current religious and social ideals.

A gifted and versatile man of letters is George Henry Lewes, whose encouragement of George Eliot was distinctly valuable, and who touched with airy grace philosophy, biography, fiction, and criticism. His best work is his *Life of Goethe*.

Meanwhile theology as well as science is productive of some considerable literary forces. In the conservative wing there is John Henry Newman, a skilful and accomplished dialectician and a stylist of singular beauty. This is exhibited in his famous *Apologia* (called forth by Kingsley's attack) ; even more in the *Plain and Parochial Sermons*. The Tractarian Movement, with its insistence on culture, can claim several notable figures. We have the pellucid piety of Keble's verse, the fine critical judgment of Dean Church, and the ripe culture of Mark Pattison. The Broad Church party gives us that picturesque historian, Dean Stanley ; and that somewhat enigmatic personality, Jowett ; Frederick Denison Maurice, pioneer of Christian Socialism, and Robertson of Brighton, whose working-class lectures on poetry were singularly fresh and attractive. On the radical side there are Francis Newman with his vigorously outspoken *Phases of Faith;* W. R. Greg, a trenchant critic of social and religious problems ; and greatest of all intellectually and spiritually, the Unitarian James Martineau. As a stylist Martineau inclines rather to the rich eloquence of the Jacobean prose-man. His earlier work is some-



JOHN RUSKIN

From a drawing after the Hollyer portrait by E. Heber Thompson

times overladen with ornament; but in *Hours of Thought* and *The Seat of Authority in Religion* the style is chastened, and for sheer beauty of thought and expression no other prose of our time can rival it.

His sister Harriet achieved less distinction but wider popularity for her vigorous criticisms on social politics.

As a dominating personality in the public eye, there is only one name, however, which for range of influence is comparable with Carlyle's, and that is Carlyle's friend, to some extent his follower, JOHN RUSKIN. Fundamentally they had much in common. Each stood aloof from the political and social life of his age, calling down curses with cheerful impartiality on both great parties. Both of them were sturdily Puritan at heart, and out of touch with many of the manifestations of modern civilization. Both, moreover, aimed at social reconstruction.

As literary forces, there was much to differentiate them. Carlyle's style is rough and staccato; Ruskin's rhythmic and legato. Carlyle dramatized his subject; Ruskin presents it like a diorama before us. Carlyle was a literary pioneer, in the first place, making Goethe known to us; Ruskin was an art pioneer, the spokesman for Turner. Both are social critics, but whereas Carlyle was a social as well as literary critic from the first, it was late in life before Ruskin turned from Art Reform to Social Reform.

Ruskin did a great work in bringing the plastic Arts and the Master Art of Architecture before the general reader. The relation between Art and Nature and the imaginative and ethical influence of great Art were expatiated upon by Ruskin in *Modern Painters*, *The Seven Lamps of Architecture*, and *Stones of Venice*, with all the illustrative eloquence his style could give them. In form his style is of the seventeenth century; it owes much to the splendid rhetoric of the Old Testament, and although too self-conscious and over ornate at times, is finely adapted for its special purpose

—*i.e.* to stimulate the conscience and imagination of the reader. His later writings, from *Unto this Last* (which made as much stir as Carlyle's *Sartor Resartus*) to *Fors Clavigera*, deal entirely with economic and educational subjects, in which he advocates what is best described as an aristocratic type of Socialism, as contrasted with the democratic type favoured by his follower William Morris. A feature of his later work is the liberal use of irony, which scarcely ever touches his earlier writings.

Two critics who derive in style from Ruskin are, John Addington Symonds, with his eloquent *Renaissance in Italy*, and Walter Pater, whose fastidious literary palate and artistic sympathies found expression in a small body of essays, notably *Appreciations*, and a story of the second century, *Marius the Epicurean*, which is less a novel than an exposition of Pater's life-philosophy—co-terminous with Keats's "Beauty is Truth, Truth Beauty."

Oscar Wilde.—Another who came for a time under Ruskin's influence was that brilliant Irishman, Oscar Wilde; but the influence was æsthetic rather than intellectual. He had little creative imagination. One cannot imagine *Dorian Gray* existing had there been no Balzac, no Gautier; and his verse takes on, chameleon-like, the colour of the poet he has last been reading; whilst even such a charming fantasy as the *Happy Prince* is a brilliant experiment in Hans Andersen's manner. But he had a subtle sense of style, and he was above all a wit of rare quality. This it is which gives peculiar value to his critical estimates, and combined with his sense of the theatre, enabled him to write one supremely exquisite farce, *The Importance of being Earnest.*

Among other critics whose work is less impressionistic, more analytical in method than those mentioned, are Walter Bagehot, an economist of note and a literary critic of restricted but unquestionable power; Richard

Holt Hutton of *The Spectator*, and Edward Dowden, excelling notably in ethical estimates ; Edmund Gosse and Stopford Brooke, especially admirable in poetical estimates ; George Saintsbury, of encyclopædic knowledge ; Frederic Harrison, the exponent of Comte's Philosophy, and that great journalist and essayist, John Morley. Finally, there was Theodore Watts-Dunton, who during the mid-century made *The Athenæum* a living force in the world of letters with his versatile and cultured pen.

Modern Industrial and Economic problems have attracted many minds to-day. A few representative names are Edward Carpenter, the poet of modern democracy ; Mr. and Mrs. Sidney Webb, its accomplished historians ; Samuel Butler, author of *Erewhon*, its satirist ; whilst E. Belfort Bax, J. A. Hobson, and Bernard Shaw are among its ablest sociological critics.

CHAPTER VII

The Post-Victorian Era

(*c.* 1890–1925)

Introduction.—About fifteen years before the death of Queen Victoria the familiar landmarks of the Victorian era began to crumble away, and a transitional period followed when new forces in every department of letters made themselves felt.

Two features detach themselves from the crowd of jostling forces as especially remarkable—the far-reaching influence of modern journalism and the influence of Russian literature upon the fiction and drama of the day.

The newspaper has influenced letters both for good and ill. At its worst it has encouraged superficiality, has mistaken smartness for brilliance, and mere sensationalism for imaginative power; at its best it has banished prolixity and artificiality and made for clearness and actuality.

Its effect upon poetry may be gauged by a glance at the poetry of the time. From the *Barrack-Room Ballads* of Rudyard Kipling, through the work of W. E. Henley and John Davidson, to John Masefield and his *Everlasting Mercy*, an alert, tingling actuality has been a prominent feature of latter-day verse. Power has been esteemed more highly than beauty, and the admonition given to young journalists to get a "punch" into their stuff has been zealously (and

sometimes literally) taken to heart by many of the verse writers.

There have been exceptions, of course. William Watson carried on the Wordsworthian tradition, and the rhythmic charm and sweetness of Tennyson left their impress in different ways upon Stephen Phillips and Alfred Noyes. The effect of the newspaper upon fiction may be seen increasingly (and in the main for good) in the novels of H. G. Wells and to a less extent in those of Arnold Bennett.

In criticism and the essay the influence of journalism has been both curious and interesting. Many of our leading critics and essayists—G. K. Chesterton, Hilaire Belloc, Bernard Shaw, for example—have been well-seasoned journalists, and much of their best work has been put into journalism. They are more than journalists—they are literary artists, and often they have deliberately sacrificed their artistic gifts to voice matters of transient and topical concern. This is not said by way of reproach. In an age of increasing hurry and hustle, good journalism has a great and important work to do. These men have done splendid spade-work for their generation, and when all allowance is made for the ephemeral nature of a measure of their work, a fair body of it can claim the more tranquil honours of literature. Perhaps the most interesting part of their productivity lies in the impetus they have given to the revival of the discursive essay—as distinct from the purely critical essay which was in the ascendant during Victorian times.

A few writers only, notably Stevenson, gave us delectable chit-chat in the previous era ; but of excellent chit-chat about men and books there is abundance to-day, and since the Great War, the number of first-class talkers in print has increased. One has but to mention such names as Robert Lynd, J. C. Squire, and E. V. Lucas.

As regards the influence of Russian literature,

this is apparent in the fiction of to-day. Russian Realism has proved a more vital influence than that of French Realism. Flaubert and Zola may have influenced an earlier generation, but Tolstoy and Dostoevski, and latterly Tchekov, have impressed themselves profoundly upon scores of modern novelists. The reason for this lies in the finer humanism of the Russian school. Sometimes we have taken over not only the psychic intensity of Dostoevski, but also his sprawling immensity of canvas. Yet the balance has been on the profit side.

During the last thirty years a great change has come over the drama. Intellectually, no doubt, it still lags behind that of other countries—Germany in particular. But the stark actuality which has extended to other forces of literature is clearly discernible in the drama. Even in plays which are just commercial products, there is an approximation to the facts of ordinary life and to the dialogue of ordinary life, which one could find in few Victorian plays.

The influence of Ibsen is discernible in the last few years of the Victorian era—and indirectly through Shaw and Barker, Ibsen has left his mark upon the English drama—but it has not been a considerable impression.

Some Leading Spirits of the New Era

Rudyard Kipling.—As a verse writer it was the realism of his method (*Barrack-Room Ballads*) that first caught the popular ear. The colloquialisms, the frank actuality, of the verse were the qualities that pleased, and it took us some time to realize that the strength of his appeal lay in his essentially romantic imagination. For romance is no matter of fine clothes. It may hide beneath a Cockney dialect and the rough humours of the mess-room. It is romance that holds

us in the haunting air of *Mandalay* and the rhythmic exhilaration of *East and West*. But his best work is inspired by India—the India of the Civil Service. He is never happier than when dealing with the conflict between Oriental fatalism and superstition and Western activity and hard common sense. *William the Conqueror*, *The Head of the District*, *The City of Dreadful Night*, are among the finest short stories of our generation. Throughout his work sounds the Imperialistic note. Sometimes he has used it too noisily—and the "Give 'em Hell" spirit which unfortunately is often (though not necessarily) associated with Imperialism, gives stridency and a certain brutality to his vision. But at his best he has proved an invigorating influence upon his day and generation.

George Bernard Shaw.—Mr. Shaw is a spirit of quite another calibre, and admirers of Mr. Kipling are seldom found in the camp of G.B.S. Yet politics apart—and as students of literature we are not concerned primarily with politics—there is no reason for withholding our admiration from imaginative genius, however diverse may be its manifestations. All genius is of the centre not of the circumference. When they are merely writing as men of talent, Kipling and Shaw differ as widely as it is possible for clever men to differ—Kipling seems merely a hot-blooded cave-man, and Shaw a cold-blooded intellectual. But at their best, both men are poets at heart (though it might pain Mr. Shaw to hear it), desperately sincere in their effort to seize on the primal things of life, moralists in the large sense of the word, and humanists in the only intelligible sense of the word. This fact is grasped more easily by taking into account Shaw's later writings—*The Showing up of Blanco Posnet*, *Back to Methuselah*, and *Saint Joan*. In his earlier work he takes great pains to conceal the fact that he is a poet at heart—though even there his

diatribes at romance and poetry were too furious to be quite genuine. We may take leave of G.B.S. by quoting his significant apologia. "I am of opinion that my life belongs to the whole community, and as long as I live it is my privilege to do for it whatever I can. I want to be thoroughly used up when I die, for the harder I work, the more I live. Life is no 'brief candle' for me. It is a sort of splendid torch which I have got hold of for the moment, and I want to make it burn as brightly as possible before handing it on to future generations."

Herbert George Wells.—Born in 1866, Mr. Wells is still in the prime of life, but as in the case of Mr. Shaw his richest period of activity lies in the decade preceding the Great War.

There is this difference between Shaw and Wells as compared with Kipling. Kipling as a force in life and letters belongs to the past. G. B. Shaw and H. G. Wells are still forces in the life of to-day.

Mr. Wells attracted attention first as a writer of scientific romances, and is as serious about the possibilities of science as a working factor in ordinary life as Lord Bacon himself. Indeed, the literary student will find not a few similarities between the author of *The New Atlantis* and the author of *New Worlds for Old.*

In his second period Mr. Wells turned from physical science to social science, and wrote a number of novels around middle-class problems. Among the best of these are *Love and Mr. Lewisham* (1900), *Kipps*, *Mr. Polly*, and *Marriage.* No novelist of his day has dealt more frankly or with greater insight (the two qualities do not always go together in modern fiction) with the complexities of the marriage problem than he.

Mr. Wells is essentially an Ideologist, and has this in common with Mr. Shaw that he uses literature primarily as a means of airing his ideas, and only

secondarily as a craftsman and artist. But when he chooses to take the trouble he can write with delicacy and beauty as well as intellectual forcefulness. *The Country of the Blind*, for instance, is one of the best short stories in modern English literature.

Gilbert Keith Chesterton.—Mr. Chesterton has made a name for himself both as an essayist, a story-teller, and a poet, and no more thoroughgoing vindicator of the romantic imagination exists to-day. Consequently he proves an excellent foil to the majority of modern writers, who either distrust romanticism, like Shaw, who keep it for jocose moods, like Bennett, or who never quite make up their minds whether it is good or bad, like H. G. Wells.

With the majority of literary men to-day, Chesterton is journalistic—deliberate in his methods, exaggerating his points, and writing with an *immediate* end in view. It is the art of the poster rather than the art of the studio. But it is an art none the less.

Chesterton's stories are amusing *jeux d'esprit*—but they do not show him at his best. He is at his best as an essayist and poet. Some of his verses—*e.g. The Ballad of the White Horse*—will probably outlive his essays; but to the present generation his essays are richer in general interest. His method is that of the paradox maker, and both to him and Mr. Shaw paradox is merely truth standing on its head to attract attention.

He acclaims the jollity of living and is angry with puritans, like Shaw, who have no use for "cakes and ale." Anæmia to him is a form of ungodliness, and he dislikes the faddist more than he does the criminal. Some of his essay work is frankly ephemeral in character, but much of it is rich both in good sense and good feeling. Despite perversities and puerilities he is a critic of power and insight. There is no better introduction to Dickens than the study of his works by Chesterton, and his book on Browning is nearly as rich in critical insight and just appraisement.

The Poetry of the New Era.—In a few notable cases, as we have seen, the elder traditional school of poetry still persists. But the new spirit dominates.

That gallant swashbuckler in letters, W. E. Henley, followed Kipling in introducing a more realistic note into verse. Henley was a fine editor—as that brilliant old weekly, *The National Observer*, testified—a stimulating if provocative critic and an unconventional poet, with genuine if not always original lyric powers. The London note is insistent in his work, and his best volume is his *London Voluntaries*.

The new spirit may be traced further in the work of Ernest Dowson and Arthur Symons. But the art here is more exotic; Dowson is the artist with the *morbidezza* touch, and Symons's pictures of *London Nights* display, for all their cleverness, a cold-blooded eroticism which grows very wearisome. Of greater importance is John Davidson, who expressed himself in farce, satire, fantasy, and romance, but was at his best in ballad writing. Especially striking are his *Ballad of Heaven*, *Ballad of a Nun*, and *Romney Marsh*. Davidson is often rough and uneven as a writer but never negligible, and at his best shows both beauty and passion.

Political life rarely yields a notable poet in these days, but Wilfred Scawen Blunt, diplomatist and traveller, is one of these rarities, and his *Love Sonnets of Proteus* are remarkable for their freshness of handling and intensity of feeling.

In the work of Francis Thompson the old and the new coalesce. By temperament and outlook he belongs to the little body of mystical poets whose lineage may be found in the seventeenth century. He has considerable affinity with Crashaw, to a less extent with Christina Rossetti, but there are touches of realism in his method, which gives it a modern flavour at times. Sincerity and tempestuous beauty characterize his best-known poem, *The Hound of*

Heaven. Obscure at times and over-ornate, he is none the less at his best a true and memorable poet.

In direct contrast with Thompson may be placed the present Laureate, Mr. ROBERT BRIDGES; yet like Thompson, and even more than he, he blends the inspiration of an older age with some modernity of method. For instance, he is a daring experimentalist in rhythmic cadences. In place of the rich colouring of Thompson we have pearl greys. A gracious singer, a sensitive scholar, a fine artist, his appeal will never be popular, but to the few he will always be an interesting figure for his prosodic experiments and subtle charm.

Sir HENRY NEWBOLT is a poet of quite another order. Temperamentally he has affinity with Henley and Kipling. He is one of the most spirited writers of patriotic verse, but is less robustious than Henley and simpler than Kipling; a deft and accomplished craftsman.

The so-called "Celtic School" stands aloof from the fashion of the day. In Ireland the literary movement is associated with Mr. W. B. YEATS, who founded the Irish Literary Society (1891) and was responsible some years later for the Irish Literary Theatre. Yeats's muse is rich in haunting music. Along with him may be mentioned (though of lesser significance) Dora Sigerson, Moira O'Neill, John Todhunter, Emily Lawless, and G. W. Russell ("A. E."). Humour as well as pathos marks the work of James Stephens, and in drama the names of John M. Synge and Lady Gregory are associated for folk plays of racy idea and rhythmic beauty.

In Scotland, the Celtic note found expression in the Ossianic-like writings of Fiona Macleod (whose *alter ego* was William Sharp), an able critic and journalist. In emphasizing the literary aspect of Welsh life, Mr. Ernest Rhys has done excellent work.

Before the coming of the Great War, a change came over the poetry of the age. Professor Saintsbury's phrase "A vagabond curiosity of matter and a tormented unrest of style," not unfitly describes many of the younger bards of the day. Browning had sounded the note of revolt against the elder conventions of verse, and Walt Whitman had gone further. The Neo-Georgians went further still. And they had in their company one of the great Victorians, Mr. THOMAS HARDY. His epic drama, *The Dynasts* (1904–8), is to English literature what Tolstoy's superb *War and Peace* is to Russian literature—sombre, impressive, piercing in its vision. Mr. Hardy wrote verse before he wrote prose, but his general recognition as poet is a matter of post-Victorian history. Often harsh in its measure and bitter in its mood, his verse attains at times a rhythmic beauty and richness that link it with the past rather than with the present, but in the main, in its deliberate realism, and in its philosophic implications, the poetry is more in harmony with the gesture of to-day.

At one with Mr. Hardy in his general attitude towards life and subject-matter, Mr. A. E. Housman harks back to an austerely classical form of expression. His output is small (*A Shropshire Lad* and *Last Poems*), but his quality is consistently high. The reactions of the War served but to break up more definitely the old traditions. At the same time they serve to give a poignancy and grimness to the verse of to-day. Thus the new school secures a wider hearing than otherwise they might have had. Mr. JOHN MASEFIELD was a power in contemporary letters before the War. His *Everlasting Mercy* and *The Widow in the Bye Street* showed even more forcibly than Kipling had done what a romantic imagination and a realistic method can achieve. But Mr. Masefield is a finer idealist than Mr. Kipling, and his extravagances of diction are due more to an aggrieved romanticism

than to a deliberate realism. Moreover, his best work does not lie in his long narrative poems, but in fugitive lyrics and his powerful drama *Nan*. He most certainly paved the way for poets like Rupert Brooke, Siegfried Sassoon, Robert Nichols, T. S. Eliot, Robert Graves: the realistic method went so far with some, that the dividing line between prose and verse broke down, and in a few Ugliness became as much a fetish as Beauty had been to some of the Victorians. As a protest against arid conventionality and pretty-prettiness the new school has done good and effective work. And though in certain cases the revolt has been pushed too far—as revolts usually are—yet the experimenting in new forms and the groping for fresh values are likely to be of service to the cause of poetry in the long run.

Meanwhile there are to-day an increasing number of poets who, while sympathizing with the new spirit, have still retained a respect and affection for the great traditions of the past. In writers like WALTER DE LA MARE, JOHN DRINKWATER, and W. H. DAVIES, mystery and beauty with varying stress are still vital inspirations.

Fiction.—During the earlier part of the New Era, the novel continued to hold its own as the most popular form of literary expression, but during the few years before the War, it had a serious competitor in the revitalized drama. During the first decade, however, the new ferment dominates the novel. Especially is this to be seen in the brilliant little band of women writers who, both in the pages of the *Yellow Book* and the *Savoy* and in the famous "Key-note" Series, sounded the note of revolt against the sex limitations of modern life. The bugle had been first sounded by that passionate little puritan Charlotte Brontë years before, and its note is now more insistent and, one may add, more strident. In 1881 Olive Schreiner gave us her *Story of an African*

Farm; but that was in the nature of a solitary cry, and it was not till the 'Nineties that we found a chorus of revolutionaries, such as George Egerton, Sarah Grand, Iota (Mrs. Caffyn), Beatrice Harraden, Elizabeth Robins, and Mrs. W. K. Clifford. Mrs. HUMPHRY WARD started with the vanguard, but her temperament was too critical and judicial to allow her to ally herself with her sister Radicals, and her work in its general texture belongs rather to the Victorian school.

In other directions Mr. Arthur Morrison opened up in his *Tales of Mean Streets* a more frankly realistic study of city life in a side that had been over sentimentalized in Victorian times. A bigger figure in the anti-romantic crusade was Mr. GEORGE GISSING, a shrewd observer and a writer of undoubted power, dry-eyed and gloomy, lacking in geniality, yet in such stories as *Demos*, *New Grub Street*, and the *Town Traveller* impressing, despite the arid outlook, by virtue of his intense sincerity.

The novel of city life and of Cockney type took on a more comedic impression in the hands of such men as Israel Zangwill, W. Pett Ridge, Edwin Pugh, and Barry Pain.

Reaction did not have it all its own way. Romanticism found a fresh vent in the dialect novel that sprang up in the late 'eighties and continued into the new century. There was James Barrie with his *Auld Licht Idylls*, the once vastly popular S. R. Crockett, and Ian Maclaren; then A. T. Quiller-Couch, picking up the torch of Stevenson, annexed Cornwall for his own, and W. W. Jacobs, deriving to some extent from Dickens and Smollett, "pegged out" the Thames-side world. The elder traditions of the historical novel were carried on by Maurice Hewlett and Stanley Weyman. Of these, Hewlett had the finer style, and Weyman the wider range. Hewlett was also a poet of distinction.

With the turn of the century a new star appeared

on the horizon—a star that is far from setting even in 1925. That star is ARNOLD BENNETT. Mr. Bennett leans towards the realistic school in his method, and differs from his great contemporary Mr. Wells in one important particular. He is in no way a propagandist. He is content to observe and record. Wells's imagination, repelled by the forces that keep middle-class life drab and monotonous, dissects and discusses. Mr. Bennett, whether in his stories of Staffordshire life (*Anna of the Five Towns, The Old Wives' Tale, Clayhanger*, etc.) or London life, simply notes them down. But that noting down is done with an amazing clarity and fidelity. Less of a social force than Mr. Wells, he is a surer though not greater literary artist. And in *The Old Wives' Tale*, he has written one of the few great novels of the last twenty years. He has had his holiday moods in such books as *The Card* and *The Grand Babylon Hotel*—but his favourite mood is a clear, steel grey.

Dealing with a higher social strata, Mr. JOHN GALSWORTHY, with equal detachment and artistry, though with less breadth and humour, has won a place of high distinction. His best work is embodied in that detailed biography of wealthy families—*The Forsyte Saga*.

There has been a recrudescence of sensational fiction during the last decade or so, started by the immense vogue of the redoubtable Sherlock Holmes of A. Conan Doyle, and the scientific discoveries of the day proved an admirable quarrying-ground for the ingenuity of expert craftsmen such as Austen Freeman, Mrs. Belloc-Lowndes, A. E. W. Mason, and E. Phillips Oppenheim.

The most remarkable figure in romantic fiction is that of JOSEPH CONRAD (1857–1924), a Pole, who learned our language and used the medium with amazing force and fire. He had a genius for atmosphere, and few have succeeded in conveying the peculiar magic and

mystery of the sea and of sea-loving folk better than he. Yet, unlike many romantic novelists, he is always master of his vision. In his work, it may be said, the bush burns with fire and is not consumed. Mention must be made also of another fine though more mannered stylist, Mr. Algernon Blackwood, in whose speculative fiction a passionate love of nature is blended with a rich fantastic imagination; but unlike many of his kind he never becomes grotesque or extravagant. No modern writer has dealt more sensitively and arrestingly with the occult side of things than he. He is the romancer of the psychic life.

The Drama.—The late Victorian age abounded in skilful playwrights, adepts in the well-made play. Among the most notable were, Henry Arthur Jones, A. W. Pinero, Haddon Chambers, and at some distance Sydney Grundy. Of these, Mr. Jones and Sir A. W. Pinero are responsible for the most substantial body of work. H. A. Jones excelled in characterization, A. W. Pinero in stage technique, whilst Haddon Chambers in one delightful comedy, *The Tyranny of Tears*, showed the freshest sense of humour. But the plays, though dealing ostensibly with phases of contemporary life, considered it largely from the point of view of the " limes " and the footlights. The new century changed all that. The famous Barker-Vedrenne management of the Court Theatre in 1905 worked a revolution in dramatic methods. Shaw, Granville Barker, and Galsworthy, differing widely in many ways, were agreed on one point, that is, to talk in the theatre upon things that vitally mattered, and to talk as men and women talked in ordinary life. To those who regard the theatre purely as a place of emotional entertainment, the work done by the dramatists of the Court Theatre was uncongenial. But it would be a great mistake to imagine that, although serious theories were treated seriously,

entertainment was lacking. There was intellectual entertainment, and often entertainment of an exhilarating kind. Of this little group of writers Mr. Shaw (already treated) was the leading spirit. But fine work was done by Mr. John Galsworthy, both here and later on at other theatres, in his studies of social problems. A few of his plays, fine in their mentality and broad outlook, scarcely made good as work in terms of the theatre. None the less Galsworthy's failures are better than many men's successes. *Strife*, if not satisfactory as a play, had splendid moments. *Justice* proved too stark and grim a tragedy for the ordinary playgoer, but it was one of the most impressive dramas ever produced on the English stage. From the stage point of view, *The Silver Box* is probably Galsworthy's most successful play of ideas. Extremely amusing, though on a lower plane, were the witty plays of St. John Hankin. Mr. H. Granville Barker—the most austere of the group—has given us one admirable family play in *The Voysey Inheritance*, but his other plays, immensely clever as they are, lack vitality. The characters are intellectual silhouettes—and the emotions have been kept in cold storage.

Among other writers who have done good work for the stage may be mentioned Hubert Davies, excelling in comedy; Stanley Houghton in his *Hindle Wakes;* A. A. Milne, admirable in dialogue; Charles M'Evoy Clere, in securing a realistic atmosphere.

The one writer who has held the stage for the last twenty years is Sir JAMES M. BARRIE, and so interesting a portent merits a lengthier consideration. It is easy to dismiss Barrie as a reactionary. He does not belong to the group of intellectuals. He is neither a propagandist nor a realist. Neither is he merely a skilful playwright, who manipulates the emotion of the playgoer. He is an imaginative man of genius, who by virtue of his whimsical humour, his rich sense

of character, and above all, his almost uncanny sense of the theatre, has given more sheer delight to the majority of playgoers than any other man of his generation. Every notable Barrie play can be symbolized by his *Dear Brutus*. We start with the world of everyday and human relationships. After a while Barrie, like his own Dearth, draws the curtain aside, and lo, the homely surroundings have vanished and there is a magic wood. We step into Barrie's ideal world with all its fantastic embellishments. We do not stay there. Before the end of the play we are back again in everyday realities. That is Barrie's way and his secret. We may and do protest at times at the extravagances and sentimentalities with which he treats us; but invariably he disarms us by his ultimate power to touch the springs of laughter and of tears. His genius is a delicate and fragile thing—like a web of gossamer. But we may say of it as was said of Desdemona's famous handkerchief, "There's magic in the web of it." So let us thank the gods for that magic. Without it the life of the last decade or so would have been infinitely duller.

Criticism and Belles-Lettres.—In prose as in verse, there are always some who hold aloof as far as is humanly possible from the spirit of the age. They are first and foremost men of letters to whom literature is an art, whose convention and rules are a matter of past history. Many of these are also Victorians in upbringing and carry on the best traditions of the past.

In literary criticism, Mr. Arthur Symons as a stylist is as delicate and subtle as Walter Pater, and often more luminous. Mr. Max Beerbohm, as the complete ironist, might have lived any time during the last hundred and fifty years, and save for slight inevitable changes of phraseology, would fit into the old Georgian era as well as he does into the Neo-Georgian life. A delightful trifler and an expert in

literary filigree work. Notable among the scholars of the new era are Sir Leslie Stephen, acutely analytical; Sir Sidney Lee, finely judicial; Prof. A. C. Bradley, the best modern interpreter of Shakespearean tragedy; Professor Hugh Walker and Professor Oliver Elton, philosophic historians of English literature; and Professor Sir Gilbert Murray, who has done so much to express Greek letters in terms of modern thought. In dramatic criticism there are the names of William Archer, the translator of Ibsen, and the more frankly impressionistic A. B. Walkley.

In travel literature on the topographical side we have Sir Martin Conway on the Andes and Sir Harry Johnston who has supplemented Stanley's picture of African life, whilst in more psychological strain Fielding Hall in his *Soul of a People* and Lafcadio Hearne in his studies of Japanese life, have struck a fresh and original note. On the more purely artistic side, there are such names as R. B. Cunninghame-Graham, a modern Don Quixote with a sense of humour and a delightful style, and Hilaire Belloc, whose *Path to Rome* is a rich treasury of unconventional travel talk. In more academic circles, Sir Walter Raleigh at Oxford and Sir A. T. Quiller-Couch at Cambridge brought the humanizing spirit into history and literature.

Among the critics who are more definitely concerned with the experimental methods and challenging attitude of to-day may be mentioned Mr. Havelock Ellis—one of our best unconventional social philosophers—and also a poet, Mr. Lascelles Abercrombie.

Of late years Mr. George Moore has forsaken fiction for autobiography and critical preferences; an admirable prose writer (*Ave*, *Salve*, *Vale*, and *Avowals*), with an engaging air of sophisticated simplicity.

Conclusion.—A final question: Watchman, what of the—new day? Victorian literature was in the

main a literature of acceptance. It had its rebels certainly. Every literary age has—and even the Peace of the Augustans was broken by the savage outcry of Swift. But the Victorian age was one of social stability, and immense material prosperity. Since the dawn of the new century the stability has been threatened, and the prosperity been found wanting. A literature characterized by restless challenge has taken its place; ragtime has usurped the older melody in other domains than musical notation. We have syncopated verse, syncopated prose, and one may add syncopated morals. The literature of the day has all the weaknesses of an experimental era that has not yet found itself. But in the hands of its ablest exponents it has also a fearless sincerity of speech and an immense vital interest in every side of life. For the rest, let the student of letters past and present take to heart the wise words of a brilliant modern critic, George Santayana: "It is the continual digestion of the substance supplied by the past that alone renders the insights of the past still potent in the present and for the future. Living criticism, genuine appreciation, is the interest we draw from year to year on the unrecoverable capital of human genius."

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